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Open to Question
Antonio Zamperla, Jr.,
Antonio Zamperla SpA

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'Roll up, roll up! (or maybe 'roll out, roll out!')

Andrew Mellor **Editor**

So the roll out of vaccination programmes against COVID-19 is now well and truly underway with tens of millions of people globally having already been vaccinated. So does this mean that guests will be rolling up to our parks and attractions in their millions any time soon?

It's a question that is on all our lips, none more so than those of facility operators themselves as they begin to gear up to reopen in 2021, whenever that may be. Here in the UK, the key date at the moment is April 12, assuming the government's road map to releasing the lockdown is not jeopardised in any way by a sudden increase in infection rates or the development of more cases of different variants.

But what will the public's reaction be to being able to visit attraction facilities once more? Some commentators say there will be huge pent up demand and that guests will come back in their droves, while those who are more cautious believe many may still not venture far, in particular to places where there are likely to be large crowds.

It's the dreaded unknown once again and there are many ponderables, but I'd go with the optimists. Park and attraction venues will without doubt have to operate at limited capacities, but I'm confident that in the vast majority of cases venues will reach those capacities on a regular basis, if not continuously during the main summer season. And a key element of ensuring that is the case will be operators making sure potential guests know fully what precautions are being taken to uphold safety against covid during a visit, be it relating to checks when booking tickets and on arrival at a facility, how rides and other attractions are operated, how precautions may differ on outdoor attractions compared to indoor attractions, protocols in restaurants and retail outlets, at other F&B outlets, in toilet facilities, in seating areas and so on. This will be crucial in giving patrons the confidence to visit parks and will have to be promoted at every opportunity.

There will, of course, be those who won't go to parks this year because of their concerns about the pandemic and being in a busy place, no matter what capacity restrictions are implemented, and that's fair enough. Overall it will, along with all the other enforced measures and limitations, result in much lower guests numbers this year but it has to be done and although the situation is inevitable, at least it will be a start to getting back to normal.

I guess another consideration for venues is the type of facility they are and what the main target audience is. For those parks, for example, that first and foremost target young adults, they may find that this market segment is more than happy to have a day out in a theme park, while those that aim for the family market and family groups of young children, parents and grandparents might lose out more. As always, it's hard to predict, so we'll just have to wait and see how things pan out.

One of the great advantages amusement, theme and waterparks have over other leisure/visitor attractions such as play centres, museums, cinemas and more, is that what they offer is mostly outside so this should, in theory, help favourably with the decision making process when people are deciding where to go. Being outdoors will definitely make people feel safer.

We certainly have an interesting few months ahead of us which may not provide the instant "back to normal" scenario which would be perfect for everyone but it will hopefully put the industry back on the road to recovery so that we can return to 2019 levels of visitation by the time 2022 comes around.

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Calendar

March 30–April 1

RAAPA Expo 2021, Pavilion 57, VDNH, Moscow, RUSSIA
Contact: RAAPA
Tel: +7 495 234 5233
Email: raapa@raapa.ru
www.raapa.ru

May 10–12

2021 Asia Amusement & Attractions Expo (AAA), China Import and Export Fair Complex (Area A), Guangzhou, CHINA
Contact: Tina Chang, Guangdong Grandeur International Exhibition Group
Tel: +86 20 2210 6418 Fax: +86 20 8257 9220
Email: sales@grandeurhk.com
www.aaaexpos.com

May 17–19

DEAL 2021, Dubai World Trade Centre, Dubai, UAE
Contact: International Expo-Consults (IEC)
Tel: +971 4 343 5777
Email: deal@iecdubai.com
www.dealmiddleeastshow.com

May 22–24

CAE Beijing 2021, China International Exhibition Centre, Shunyi New Venue, Beijing, CHINA
Contact: Katie Wang, L&A International Ltd., 6 Penmere Grove, Sale, Cheshire, M33 4FP, UK
Tel: +44 (0)161 610 0022
Email: katie.w@chinaattractionsexpo.org
www.chinaattractionsexpo.org

June 3–5

Atrax '21. 9th International Amusement – Attraction, Park – Recreation Industry and Services Exhibition, Istanbul Expo Centre, Istanbul, TURKEY
Contact: Tureks International Fairs Co.
Tel: +90 212 570 63 05
Email: nergis@tureksfuar.com.tr
www.tureksfuar.com.tr

July 15–17

Korea Attraction Fair 2021, Bexco Hall 1, Busan, SOUTH KOREA
Contact: JM Company Co.
Tel: +82 1544 7052 Email: jm_fair@naver.com
www.kaafair.com/main.php

August 10–13

IAAPA Expo Asia 2021, Shanghai New International Expo Centre (SNIEC), Shanghai, CHINA
Contact: International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, 4155 West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando, Florida, USA
Tel: +1 321 319 7600
Fax: +1 321 319 7690
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo-asia

September 7–9

Saudi Entertainment and Amusement Expo, Riyadh International Convention and Exhibition Centre, Riyadh, SAUDI ARABIA
Contact: DMG Events
Tel: +96 612 697 0287
Email: marketing@saudientertainmentandamusement.com
www.saudientertainmentexpo.com

September 9–11

GTI GUANGZHOU 2021, Area A, China Import and Export Fair Pahou Complex, Guangzhou, CHINA
Contact: Haw Ji Co., Ltd./Game Time International
Tel: +86 20 8126 9851
Email: gametime@taiwanslot.com.tw
http://www.gtiexpo.com.tw/cncht/index.php

September 28–30

IAAPA Expo Europe, Barcelona, SPAIN
Contact: International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, 4155 West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando, Florida, USA
Tel: +1 321 319 7600
Fax: +1 321 319 7690
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo-europe

October 16–18

CAE Shanghai 2021, Shanghai World Expo Exhibition and Convention Centre, Shanghai, CHINA
Contact: Katie Wang, L&A International Ltd., 6 Penmere Grove, Sale, Cheshire, M33 4FP, UK
Tel: +44 (0)161 610 0022
Email: katie.w@chinaattractionsexpo.org
www.chinaattractionsexpo.org

October 20–21

WWA Show 2021, Walt Disney World Resort, Orlando, Florida, USA
Contact: WWA, 8826 Santa Fe Drive, Suite 310, Overland Park, KS 66212, USA
Tel: +1 913 381 6734
Email: patty@waterparks.org
www.waterparks.org

November 10–11


Family Attraction Expo 2021, NEC Birmingham, UK
Contact: 4 Colston Ave., Bristol, BS1 2NT, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 117 930 4927
www.familyattractionexpo.co.uk

November 16–19

IAAPA Attractions Expo, Orange County Convention Centre, Orlando, Florida, USA
Contact: International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, 4155 West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando, Florida, USA
Tel: +1 321 319 7600
Fax: +1 321 319 7690
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo

November 30–December 2

MAPIC, Palais des Festivals, Cannes, FRANCE
Contact: Reed MIDEM, 27 Quai Alphonse Le Gallo, CS 10026 Boulogne, FRANCE
Tel: +33 179 71 95 15
Email: Daniela.jakovljevic@reedmidem.com
www.mapic.com

 Additional copies of **InterPark** distributed at these events.

As dates sometimes change, please check with organisers before visiting international trade events.

DEAL 2021 is scheduled to take place at the Dubai World Trade Centre, Dubai, UAE, from May 17 to 19.





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Zamperla appoints Antonio Zamperla Jr. as new CEO

ZAMPERLA, the Italian design and manufacturing company best known for creating family rides and attractions worldwide, has appointed a new CEO.

In January 2021, Antonio Zamperla, Jr., grandson of the firm's founder Antonio Zamperla, Sr., and son of the company's president Alberto Zamperla, became the new CEO. In addition, the company has also announced the appointment of Valerio Ferrari to the role of chief sales officer and Adam Sandy to the position of sales and marketing director of the strategic roller coaster division.

Antonio Zamperla, Jr., has been working with his father Alberto for more than 20 years. During this time, the company has undergone significant economic growth. With the introduction of robotics and artificial intelligence in the design process, Zamperla is at the height of innovation in attraction design. The father and son team also oversaw the relaunch of Coney Island through the US-based company Central Amusement International.

Zamperla continues to supply the biggest theme parks around the world with rides and attractions and has been involved in the design and construction of amusement parks in Russia, China, the Philippines and other countries.

Sally Dark Rides expands sales and leadership teams

SALLY Dark Rides, creators of family-friendly attraction experiences around the world, has expanded its sales and leadership teams. The move is part of the company's wider strategy for future growth.

Joining the team as vice-president is Karen Staley, who brings more than 23 years of global attractions experience to the company. Staley previously served as senior vice-president of IAAPA EMEA and IAAPA North America.

Hudson Wood has been appointed as a new sales associate. Wood has a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration and marketing and previously worked with Herschend Entertainment in the group sales department at Wild Adventures theme park.

Lauren Wood Weaver has been promoted from director to vice-president of marketing and business development. Weaver has more than 15 years' experience in the global amusement and entertainment industry. Victoria Lane, who was the company's former corporate controller, has stepped into the position of vice-president of finance.

John Wood, CEO of Sally Dark Rides, commented: "With these additions and our strengthened leadership team, we are laying the foundation to expand our client roster around the world."



Empire Industries changes name to Dynamic Technologies



EMPIRE Industries, specialist in the design, supply and installation of media-based attractions and ride systems for the global theme park industry, is changing its name to Dynamic Technologies Group Inc.

The change of name symbolises a number of important strategic moves being carried out by the company. The timing of the launch of the new name coincides with the completion of a number of tactical initiatives, including the imminent opening of a Flying Theatre co-venture in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee.

It also coincides with the company's successful completion of the handover of its first special effects coaster in Abu Dhabi.

Guy Nelson, executive chairman and CEO of the company, said: "The name change is reflective of many things, not the least of which is the strategic pivot the company has been making towards creating and leveraging its proprietary technology."

The new name will be effective from March 1, 2021.

Third AUREA Awards event held online



Michael Mack congratulates Carly Schrader on winning the AUREA Entertainment Award.

ON January 22 and 23, 2021, the third AUREA Award event took place. The awards, initiated by Europa-Park's Michael Mack, honour the best ideas, developments and products from the entertainment sectors. Experts and visionaries from around the world gathered virtually to exchange ideas, network and make contacts during the event which was live streamed from Europa-Park.

Following a specialist conference and a presentation of the 10 finalists, a jury comprising leading figures in the industry announced the four winners of this year's AUREA Awards.

The award for the new development with the best experience went to the start-up Feelbelt, a German company that creates a belt that translates acoustic signals into haptic impulses. The belt thereby enables games, films and music to be experienced in a new and intense way.

The jury chose the German project Rebuilt from Memories as the idea with the greatest impact. The American firm Adventure Lab received the award in the Interactive category, with the VR game Dr. Crumb's School for Disobedient Pets especially impressing the judges.

The creative award also went to a US project, namely the organisers of the well-known Burning Man festival, an annual event in the state of Nevada. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire event was transformed into a virtual replica.

NEWS IN BRIEF



AGS to launch mini golf throwback to the 50s and 60s

ADVENTURE Golf & Sports (AGS), a global leader in the design, construction and installation of fun and interactive miniature golf and sports products, is to launch a new product known as AmericanPie Mini Golf, fun golf courses that are a throwback from the 1950s and 60s.

AmericanPie boasts an easy set-up, a flexible layout and is designed for quick disassembly for moving and storing. The AGS design team say they wanted to eliminate the traditional golf hole cup design and use a Carpet Cup instead to capture the ball.

Scott Lundmark, president of AGS, explained the idea behind the new mini golf product, saying: "The idea was hatched as we created and installed several fun and whimsical nine-hole courses on the decks of Carnival Cruise Line ships.

"We took that idea and created AmericanPie, a unique, retro nine-hole course that has lots of tricks, is fun and super colourful with its geometric edges and portable obstacles. The entire product reminds us of mini golf courses of the past and that's why we named it AmericanPie," Lundmark added.

WORLD AZA, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, has selected a handful of member-led conservation projects to provide support to through the SAFE: Saving Animals from Extinction grant programme. The scheme is now in its second year. Its goal is to create funds for members of AZA who are introducing plans designed to advance the recovery of species.

US SeaWorld San Antonio has launched the new SeaWorld Mardi Gras event, which kicked off on Saturday, February 6. The whole park is adorned in traditional Mardi Gras attire and taking centre stage is a New Orleans style carnival, complete with live music, flamboyant costumes, Mardi Gras inspired cuisine and drinks, as well as rides and animal encounters.

UK Having received planning permission, Clacton Pavilion is to install a new tourist wheel that will mark the town's 150th anniversary. The wheel will measure more than 30m in height and will be 20m in diameter. It will be located within the Pavilion's grounds and boast views of the seafront. The attraction will feature 24 gondolas, with a capacity of hosting 144 guests at one time. Wheelchair access will be available and the gondolas can be sponsored by local businesses.

CHINA Fantawild Oriental Heritage park in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, China, will officially open on May 1. This extensive heritage park will feature 11 large-scale themed projects, including a Boonie Bears themed 4D theatre and other themed attractions centred on Chinese myths. It will also be home to more than 50 amusement rides, including roller coasters, lazy rivers, a flume ride, sky jumping rides and more.



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Jora Vision unveils new turnkey experience – DomeMotion360

JORA Vision, a leading European themed attraction design and build company, has unveiled DomeMotion360, a new turnkey experience.

DomeMotion360 has been developed for attraction sites that strive to meet the demand for immersive experiences that bring something new and tell stories in a unique way. The indoor dark ride involves visitors boarding a guided ride vehicle. Once inside, they are taken on an immersive experience travelling through different scenes.

The high-tech, immersive experience incorporates a choreography of décor, sets, sounds, lighting, projection mapping, special and visual effects and music to take visitors on an unforgettable journey. The ride provides full immersion through 360 degree projection and vehicle movement.

The DomeMotion360 is created for all ages. With a minimum required footprint of approximately 225sq.m, the attraction is particularly suitable for smaller venues such as zoos and museums. Indeed, the ride has been specifically developed for those museums and zoos that aspire to fulfil these higher expectations of visitors.



Slagharen renames monorail in honour of founder

SLAGAREN, the amusement park and holiday resort in the Dutch province of Overijssel, has renamed its monorail Pioneer Express 63. The name change has been made to honour the founder of the theme park.

Henk Bemboom first opened the much-loved attraction site in 1963. It was originally known as the Shetland Ponypark Slagharen. The park has undergone many changes since then but has always retained some of its traditional appeal.

CEO Dave Storm wanted to reignite the park's rich history and decided to rename the monorail as the Pioneer Express 63. The monorail travels past the old office of Bemboom Snr., "where many secrets are stored." It carries on through the park and into tunnels where guests are inspired by prints that celebrates the park's history.

Commenting on the renamed Pioneer Express 63, Storm said: "We are convinced that in this way we will pay tribute to the rich history of Slagharen and honour the ideas of Bemboom Snr. who would have turned 100-years-old on February 20, 2021."



Masin joins Vekoma as global sales and business development manager



VEKOMA Rides, the Netherlands based ride design and manufacturing company, has appointed Nicola Masin as the company's new global sales and business development manager.

With Masin onboard, Vekoma plans to expand its services by providing professional sales support in offering innovative designs and high quality rides and attractions to its existing and future amusement and theme park clients.

Masin will be responsible for part of the EMEA and CIS countries, regions where Vekoma has a substantial customer base. He has more than 20 years' experience in the global attractions industry and has been involved in design and product development, as well as theme park planning.

According to Peter van Bilsen, executive vice-president sales and marketing at Vekoma, Masin's background in sales, management and marketing, coupled with his experience in the development and implementation of strategic business development and product development, makes him a valuable addition to the team.

The position came into effect on February 1.

New immersive art experience to open in Amsterdam



A NEW immersive art experience is coming to Amsterdam. Rembrandts Amsterdam is an historic experience, which transports guests back 350 years to the 17th century.

Visitors will visit a reconstruction of Rembrandt's last studio, where the artist's iconic "last works" were created. In the "lost" studio guests will meet Rembrandt alongside other characters, including the artist's mistress Hendrickje, his daughter Cornelia and his son Titus.

Citysaurus, Experiences with Impact, a start-up that aims to develop, manage and operate meaningful, educational and cultural experiences about local stories, designed and created Rembrandts Amsterdam. The creative team adopted modern techniques to bring an immersive story based on Amsterdam's most famous painter to life.

Simeon van Telling and Martin Poiesz, the founders of Citysaurus, Experiences with Impact, have been involved in creating immersive experiences for museums and other attraction sites for many years.

Simeon van Telling explained the aim of Rembrandts Amsterdam, commenting: "This is the story of Rembrandt. However, we wanted to highlight different aspects of his life, most of them untold or unknown to the general public. For example, not a lot of people know that Rembrandt declared bankruptcy. He was forced to give up his grand residence (the Rembrandthuis) and his household effects were auctioned off. In order to ward off creditors, Rembrandt's wife and son legally became his employers. This enabled him to continue his work as a painter."

Rembrandts Amsterdam is located at Amsterdam's famous Leidseplein square. The attraction is expected to open at the end of spring 2021.



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Cornet and D'Hondt team up to form BoldMove Nation

BENOIT Cornet, who has more than 20 years' experience in the entertainment industry as CEO and founder of dark ride company Alterface, has teamed up with Anja D'Hondt, a two-decade expert in PR and team management.

The pair, whose career paths had previously crossed, have united their skills by co-launching Belgium based BoldMove Nation, a network of partners in the entertainment industry with creative and technology expertise.

It is BoldMove's mission to "create happier worlds" which are infused with media-based attractions and built with proven technologies and compelling stories and IPs. By partnering with BoldMove Nation, attraction and entertainment sites can bring "new, exhilarating and immersive experiences to their visitors." One partner of BoldMove Nation is the recently launched Houba World, which successfully merges creativity, IP and technology.

Innovative Leisure completes key projects for Haven Holiday Parks



DESPITE 2020 being a year like no other, with the global pandemic impacting on the attractions industry more than almost any other sector, adventure attractions specialist Innovative Leisure was able to complete a number of projects while continuing with on-going service activities.

Among those projects to be completed by the company were two new developments for two of Bourne Leisure's Haven Holiday Parks in the UK, both involving high ropes and junior ropes courses. At the Golden Sands Holiday Park in Mablethorpe, on the east Lincolnshire coast, Innovative Leisure completed the installation of a Sky Trail high ropes course in addition to a Sky Tykes junior ropes course for younger guests.

At Caister on Sea Holiday Park, also on the east coast near Great Yarmouth in Norfolk, the company completed a similar installation with the venue adding a new Sky Trail high ropes course, complimented by a Sky Tykes junior ropes course.

Both of the Sky Trail courses are 10 pole, single level attractions. Each has 19 different adventure elements, offering challenges such as walk the plank and the rolling log, along with the extra thrilling roller rail element which sees participants suspended from the course using ropes to pull themselves to the other side – with only fresh air below! The Sky Tykes junior ropes courses are seven pole courses and feature the Sky Rail Zip element. Bourne Leisure's Simon Palmer, head of activities and leisure, commented: "These new high ropes activities fit in with our strategy of improving the on-site offering to our owners and guests. They create an exciting focal point for family groups and allow us to do more hourly capacity than previous traditional versions. The junior courses have already performed well at two other Haven sites. Innovative Leisure have supported us throughout the projects and helped overcome some unique pandemic challenges."

Research shows UK consumers reluctant to visit attractions in 2021

RESEARCH conducted by the Omnico Group has found that eight in 10 (78 per cent) of theme park consumers in the UK are reluctant to visit sites in 2021 due to ongoing concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, as many as one in four guests say they won't be visiting attraction sites at all this year.

The research asked more than 2,000 UK consumers their thoughts on visiting theme parks and other entertainment sites such as zoos, aquariums, museums and casinos this year. 23 per cent say they are concerned about returning to such public places. More than half (52 per cent) of the participants said they believe technology will play a vital part in helping alleviate fears and ensure the safety of guests.

When it comes to specific concerns, 58 per cent say their top worry is navigating crowds. 54 per cent of those interviewed said the inability to socially distance is their leading concern. One in three UK consumers are of the belief that attraction sites are more focused on bringing in money than ensuring visitor safety.



Cinemovida installs its first MX40 theatre

CINEMOVIDA, a family-run chain of independent cinemas in France, has installed its first ever MX40 theatre.

The company teamed up with MediaMation, Inc., providers of innovative technological solutions to the cinema, themed

entertainment and amusements markets, to install a 60-seat MX4D Motion EFX Theatre to bring a new experience to Cinemovida's arsenal.

The 4D effects in the new theatre from MediaMation include wind, rain, scent, back pokers and motion, among many more. By adding the MX40 technology to its cinemas, Cinemovida hopes to provide its patrons with an immersive and revitalising experience following the COVID-19 health crisis.

As Stephan Miche, secretary general of Cinemovida, commented: "Even if the pandemic crisis makes us suffer, our goal remains the same – to continue expanding and to be at the top of technology. Our investment in MX40 fulfils one of these goals!"

Cinemovida remains closed due to COVID-19-imposed restrictions and is waiting on a reopening date.



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First snow city family entertainment centre to open in Saudi

AL Othaim, mall operators and specialists in family entertainment, is to open the first snow city in Saudi Arabia.

The facility will be located at the Al Othaim Mall in Rabwa, Riyadh and is due to open on July 13, 2021. The venue will adhere to the highest levels of health and safety measures.

Fahad bin Abdullah Al Othaim, CEO, commented on the aim of the tourist attraction, saying: "A touristic attraction of this magnitude coincides with the kingdom's 2030 vision that aims to boost and develop internal tourism."

The snow attraction will cover an area of 5,000sq.m and will have an hourly capacity of 350 people. The site will be home to 12 rides, a panoramic suspension bridge, ice huts, rope courses, ice bumper cars, a sledging and ski zone, a climbing wall and snow mobiles.

The family entertainment centre will also accommodate events and birthday parties and there will be a series of restaurants for visitors to enjoy.

Meraas takeover of DXB Entertainments looking likely

THE prospect of a buyout of Middle East leisure company DXB Entertainments seems to be edging ever more closer.

The Dubai-based theme park operator reported a net loss of AED2.7bn (\$US735m) for the year ending December 31, 2020. This was a loss of one third compared to the previous year. The company is pinning its significant loss in revenue, which fell by 71 per cent in 2020, on the tourism slump caused by the global pandemic.

DXB Entertainments, previously known as Dubai Parks and Resorts, constitutes the largest integrated leisure and attractions destination in the Middle East, with its three main theme parks being Motiongate, Bollywood Parks and Legoland Dubai.

Shareholders in DXB are looking at an offer from local developers Meraas Leisure and Entertainment, its largest shareholder, to acquire 100 per cent of the issued ordinary shares in DXB. According to DXB Entertainments, the offer is "fair and reasonable" and it had urged shareholders to vote in favour of the deal at the company's AGM on March 9.



New attractions being developed in the Middle East

THEME parks in the Middle East have been working on a variety of new projects despite the difficulties posed by the global pandemic.

One new facility that has continued to move ahead with its plans is the huge Qiddiya resort in Saudi Arabia, which among a plethora of venues and facilities will incorporate the Qiddiya Six Flags theme park. Scheduled to open in 2023, the centrepiece attraction at the park will be the world's fastest roller coaster. To be built by Intamin and known as the Falcon's Flight, the attraction will feature almost 2.5 miles of track, reach a top speed of 155mph and will include a vertical cliff dive into a 160m deep (524ft) valley.

Phillipe Gas, who was appointed as Qiddiya chief executive in November 2020, said the construction project has been largely unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Gas commented on the aim of the Qiddiya project, saying: "Qiddiya is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to develop an unforgettable offering that will transform entertainment for an entire region and create cherished memories for current and future generations."

Meanwhile, in Dubai, Bollywood Parks Dubai opened in January 2021 with nine new rides and an authentic Bollywood themed shopping experience. The park is also now home to the tallest swing ride in the world, the Bollywood Skyflyer, which stands at 140m tall.

Waterpark projects set to open in Dubai in 2021



DUBAI is renowned for being home to some great waterparks, including Wild Wadi at Jumeirah Beach and Aquaventure at Atlantis, The Palm. And this year will see yet more waterpark offerings opening in the emirate.

A brand new venue will be known as Jungle Bay. The attraction site is due to open in early 2021 on Mina Seyahi, next door to Meridien Mina Seyahi Beach Resort and Marina. The family-friendly waterpark will feature huge slides, a wavepool and a specially-designed AquaPlay area for children of all ages.

Additionally, The Royal, the new sister hotel of the Atlantis, The Palm hotel, is also set to open in 2021. The well-known Aquaventure Waterpark at the site is undergoing a huge upgrade and expansion this year, which will make it one of the world's biggest waterparks. At the heart of the upgrade is Trident Tower, a 34m tower that features 12 new slides. Among these will be the ProSlide MammothBLAST, a 449m, family-friendly water coaster.

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IAAPA study shows impact of COVID-19 on US attractions industry

RESEARCH carried out by IAAPA, the global association for the attractions industry, shows the scope of the impact the COVID-19

pandemic has had on the attractions industry in the United States.

The report, which was compiled by Jim Futrell, IAAPA historian and market research professional, reveals that the employment loss in the attractions sector is five times higher than the average loss across all other industries. In July 2020, typically the peak month for employment in the attractions industry, there was a 35 per cent fall in employment compared to July 2019.

The research highlights the urgent need for support from elected officials and policymakers in the US to play a role in facilitating the safe reopening of attraction sites. IAAPA is calling for additional COVID-19-related relief legislation to support the industry.

John Hallenbeck, vice-president, North America, IAAPA, commented on the situation, saying: "It's imperative to the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of Americans that state and local governments continue to push for the safe reopening of attractions facilities as soon as possible."

Cedar Point to celebrate 150th anniversary with summer of events

CEDAR Point in Ohio is celebrating 150 years in operation with a summer packed with special events. Visitors to the theme park can experience a new ride, as well as night parades and parties. They will also have the chance to win a "Ticket of a Lifetime."

The park's milestone anniversary year was actually in 2020 but the celebrations were put on hold because of the global pandemic. This year, however, the summer events' season will kick-off with the Frontier Festival, which celebrates hope, health and harvest. The festival will run on the weekends of May 14 to 16 and May 21 to 23 and then daily from May 28 until June 13.

During the festival, the park's Frontier Town will be transformed into a Wild West bonanza with interactive games, live music and street entertainers. The Frontier Festival food and drinks menu will be centred on the theme of cheery harvest, with some mouth-watering cherry-themed dishes and drinks available for guests to sample.

Jason McClure, vice-president and general manager of Cedar Point, said: "The entire team is eager to celebrate the park's postponed 150th anniversary with new entertainment, new dining options, commemorative merchandise, a great new family ride and more."



Quassy to open in April with community service initiatives

QUASSY Amusement Park in Middlebury, Connecticut, is due to open on April 24 this year, alongside community service initiatives. Guests to the amusement park will be offered discounts on all-day ride passes when they donate items for charitable organisations.

Eric Anderson, president at Quassy Amusement Park, commented: "With so many families struggling during the Covid crisis, the park decided to dedicate its first two weekends to causes that will assist in a number of ways."

Food items donated to the park will be given to local food pantries. Personal care donations will go to Acts 4 Ministry in Waterbury, Connecticut, and dog food and dog toys will be given to Brass City Rescue, also in Waterbury.

The park also has a long-standing partnership with Greater Waterbury Campership Fund, dedicated to enabling children from underprivileged families to attend summer camp.

As Anderson added: "The park will continue to support campership. We have always given a portion of opening weekend proceeds to them, although that didn't happen last year due to our late opening (June 20) because of the pandemic. However, we did make a contribution late in the season."

Peppa Pig theme park to open at Legoland Florida in 2022



A Peppa Pig theme park is coming to Legoland Florida Resort. Merlin Entertainments has partnered with Hasbro of Life to create the new playful place for youngsters to enjoy their first theme park experience. The site will be the world's first standalone Peppa Pig theme park.

The new Peppa Pig attractions site at Legoland Florida will feature numerous rides and interactive attractions, as well as themed playscapes. There will also be water play areas with "muddy puddles."

Fun live shows will take place daily centred on recognisable locations from the Peppa Pig brand. Young guests will be able to meet Peppa and her friends as they wander round the theme park meeting and greeting families.

The rides and attractions at the new Peppa Pig Theme Park will be announced this summer. When the park opens in 2022, it will be a separately ticketed area to Legoland Florida Resort.

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2021 reopening date announced for California's Great America

CALIFORNIA'S Great America, the 112-acre amusement park owned and operated by Cedar Fair, hopes to reopen on May 22 this year.

The park is the first in the state of California to officially announce a reopening date. In a statement, California's Great America said: "We are excited to announce California's Great America's opening day – May 22 – and we look forward to welcoming you back to a fun and safe environment. We continue to monitor state guidelines and work with industry and government officials to ensure our reopening plan meets all required health and safety regulations."

When Cedar Fair announced that California's Great America would not be reopening in 2020, it was the first theme park in California to commit to remaining closed last year. California recently lifted its stay-at-home restrictions, which began in December 2020. Restaurants are now allowed to serve diners outside and beauty salons can reopen.

Busch Gardens Tampa Bay's Food and Wine Festival returns

THE much-loved Food and Wine Festival at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay is returning this year. From February 20, the Florida theme park began inviting visitors to sample dishes from 24 culinary cabins serving more than 110 bites, including 22 new dishes.

The celebration of diverse cuisine will be open each weekend from February 20 to April 25. This huge food festival presents guests with an equally diverse beverage list to wash down the dishes, comprising more than 80 wines, brews and cocktails.

Among the savoury delights is Shrimp 'n' Grits with Andouille sausage and crispy fried chicken biscuit slider with bourbon blackberry jam. This dish is available at the festival's Kitchen Culinary Cabin. Also vying for food-lovers' attention is the lobster white cheddar Kraft Mac N Cheese at All American Eats by Kraft-Heinz.

The festival will adhere to Tampa Bay's already stringent health and safety measures, including limited capacity to ensure safe physical distancing can be maintained.



Intercard completes installation at Broadway Grand Prix

INTERCARD, a world leader in cashless technology for the attractions industry, has completed an installation at Grand Prix Family Race Park, the popular go-kart attraction site at Myrtle Beach.

The Intercard system features in a major arcade where visitors can play around 75 games in a huge 20,000sq.m space. Broadway Grand Prix at Myrtle Beach is run by Lazarus Entertainment Group. The installation of the cashless system was the group's first venture with a cashless technology system.

Garrett Watts, director of operations at the Grand Prix Family Race Park, said: "We wanted to upgrade our whole arcade and bring in some new games and new attractions for our guests. And we thought that adding a cashless system would go a long way for the ease of use for our guests, but also for our operations as well."

Plans are in motion to revamp the whole of Grand Prix Family Race Park at Myrtle Beach in the next two years and consolidate all attractions into the cashless system.

Mexico's first Nickelodeon resort to open in June 2021



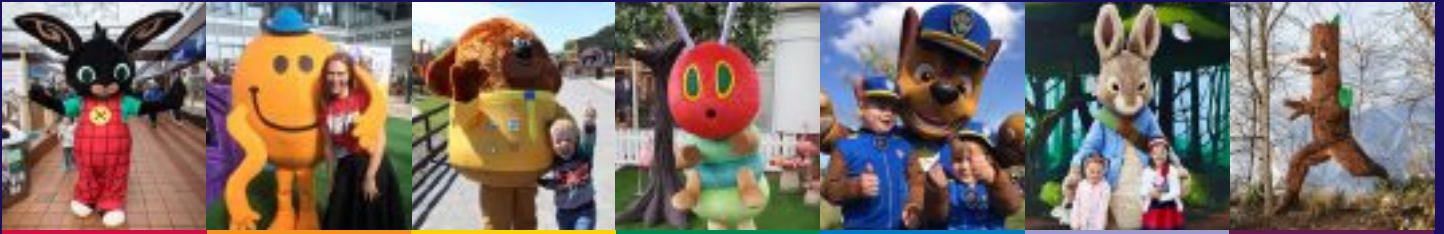
THE first Nickelodeon resort in Mexico is due to open in June 2021. To be called Nickelodeon Place the new venue will feature favourite Nickelodeon characters, including SpongeBob SquarePants, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Dora the Explorer, PAW Patrol and more.

Another key feature will be a kids' play zone known as Club Nick, featuring immersive entertainment experiences, a craft lab, special themed days, a playground, a stage and surprise visits by the much-loved Nickelodeon characters.

Nickelodeon Place is part of Nickelodeon Hotels and Resorts Riviera Maya. The resort will comprise 280 oceanfront swim-up suites, which incorporate family-friendly amenities including fun art pieces of beloved show archives, two bathrooms in every suite and furnishings inspired by Nickelodeon's iconic branding.

At the centre of the resort's entertainment is Aqua Nick, a six-acre themed waterpark. The site features more than 2,000sq.ft of slides and over 1,820sq. ft of river rides, including a Lazy River and an Adventure River.

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Details of Super Nintendo World attractions unveiled

UNIVERSAL Studios Japan has unveiled details of Super Nintendo World, which was due to open in Japan on February 4.

The opening has been postponed due to Osaka Prefecture being declared as in a state of emergency.

Instead, Universal Studios Japan held a special preview day of the new theme park, which included footage of its star attractions, such as Mario Kart: Koopa's Challenge, Yoshi's Adventure and Bowser, Jr., Shadow Snowdown, a Kinect-style ride.

The footage includes tours of the different zones at the park and snippets of its retail outlets, as well as of its different characters and F&B. The preview shows details of the park's full menu and various places to eat, which include Kinopio's Café and Yoshi's Snack Island.

Details of the Power Up Bands, which are linked to smartphones via the Universal Studios Japan app, are also provided in the footage. Armed with the Power Up Bands, guests will be able to collect digital coins and compete with other visitors.

IAAPA Expo Asia 2021 to take place in Shanghai in August



IAAPA has announced that the IAAPA Expo Asia 2021 will now take place in Shanghai, China, from August 10 until 13.

The event was originally planned to take place in Macao, China, in June. The change of the location and date are in response to the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and optimism that life will be less disrupted as the year goes on.

The expo will be held at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre (SNIEC) and preparations are in place for a smooth transition to the SNIEC. The event will begin with a full conference day on Tuesday, August 10, and the following three days will comprise educational programmes, special events and more.

Hal McEvoy, president and CEO of IAAPA, said: "IAAPA's role has always been to help members meet, do business and learn from each other. It is more important than ever we provide such opportunities in a safe manner, at the right time, in the right location. After careful review and with significant input from our team, members, exhibitors and the IAAPA board of directors, the decision has been made to relocate IAAPA Expo Asia 2021 to Shanghai, China."

Extensive upgrade set for Sydney's Taronga Zoo

THE New South Wales government in Australia has confirmed that Taronga Zoo in Sydney is to undergo an extensive upgrade, costing AUS\$16m (US\$12.8m).

The funding will enable the zoo to be expanded so it can increase and improve conservation efforts and subsequently attract more visitors.

The work will be primarily focused on the Australia Precinct area of the zoo, which is especially popular among visitors. Included in the upgrades will be a koala viewing canopy walk and extensions to the walkthrough experiences in the wallaby and kangaroo habitats.

The plans also include an underway viewing area and enhancements to the nocturnal display.

Taronga Zoo has been an important feature of Sydney Harbour since it opened in 1916. In 2017, the facility launched luxury eco-accommodation, allowing guests to stay in a Wildlife Retreat and be immersed in a wildlife experience.

Matt Kean, minister for energy and environment, commented: "The project will see new life breathed into parts of the precinct that are more than 30-years-old, improving the visitor experience and encouraging more people to get out and learn about the conservation of our iconic Aussie animals."

The upgrade work is due to start in forthcoming months and is expected to be complete by 2023.



New AUDC set to be world's largest marine observatory

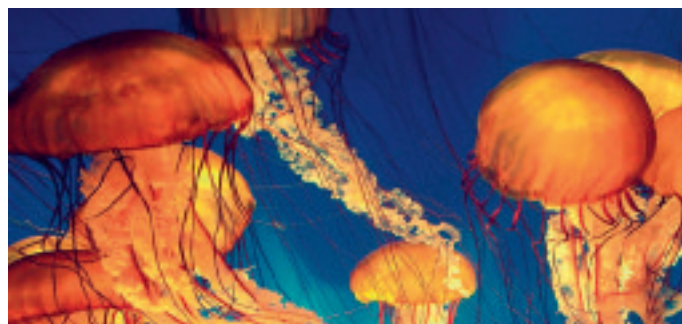
THE new Australian Underwater Discovery Centre (AUDC), which is to be built at Busselton, Geopraphe Bay, in Western Australia, is set to become the largest marine observatory in the world.

As well as attracting visitors and being a key tourist attraction in the region, the centre will act as an international marine research hub for scientific research.

The AUDC will be developed on the existing Busselton Jetty Underwater Observatory. The original observatory opened in 2003 but was only able to accommodate 44 visitors every hour. The new site will be designed to enable large numbers of visitors to enjoy the experiences simultaneously, as well as providing more extensive research facilities.

Richard Coutts, who is involved in the project, said: "The goal is to promote the education, awareness and monitoring of the jetty's immediate marine environment and the wider environs of Geopraphe Bay."

The AUDC is poised to open by the end of 2022. It is expected to attract more than 900,000 visitors by the end of 2023.





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Ardent says parks may not recover for at least 12 months

ARDENT Leisure, the Australia-based leisure company which owns and operates attraction and leisure sites across Australia, New Zealand and the US, says its theme park business may not recover for at least 12 months from the effects of COVID-19.

The company experienced a loss of \$83.6m in the first half of 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Ardent pointed to its theme park venues on the Gold Coast, including Dreamworld, SkyPoint and WhiteWater, as being impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.

John Osborne, head of theme parks for Ardent Leisure, said the business is hoping to attract interstate visitors when border restrictions have been eased. He said: "The Australian government's vaccine programme leaves us feeling optimistic about the prospect of a strong recovery. However, we believe that uncertainty is likely to prevail for at least the next 12 months."

The operator is also hopeful that a new roller coaster being installed at Dreamworld, known as the Steel Taipan, will attract more visitors when it opens later in 2021.

Genting's SkyWorlds theme park to open mid-2021

RESORTS World Genting's (RWG) movie-inspired theme park Genting Skyworlds is due to start welcoming guests for the first time in the second quarter of 2021.

The theme park will feature nine movie and adventure inspired worlds for visitors to immerse themselves in, including Robots Rivet Town, Liberty Lane, Eagle Mountain, Central Park, Ice Age, Epic, Rio, Studio Plaza and Andromeda Base.

According to Lee Thiam Kit, head of business operations and strategy at RWG, the group is committed to opening the theme park this year, despite the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since its conception, RWG has invested RM3.2 billion (US\$800 million) into Genting SkyWorlds, which it believes will become a valuable part of the Malaysian economy and its tourism industry.

"We're committed to this park and we will see to it that it opens, barring unforeseen circumstances," said Lee Thiam Kit. "Going forward, when we open, there will be jobs created and the park will add economic activity directly and indirectly, as well as a boost to tourism in Malaysia and Pahang."



Australian theme parks reduce operating hours



SOME of the largest theme parks in Australia have been forced to reduce their opening hours because of a lack of visitors.

In Queensland, many of the biggest attraction sites are having to close for several days a week because of sparse visitor numbers, both domestic and international. The sites include Wet 'n' Wild, WhiteWater World and the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary.

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council said the decision to reduce operating hours shows the need for theme parks to continue to receive support both at a state and federal government level. However, tourism officials are hopeful that the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines means there is "light at the end of the tunnel" for operators that are struggling.

As Patricia O'Callaghan, chief executive of Destination Gold Coast, said: "I can't believe we are here after 12 months of being in this situation. To finally see that vaccine rolling out and to know the Gold Coast will be among the first to roll it out, there is starting to be a light at the end of the tunnel."

Haichang Cultural Tourism complex gets green light in Ningbo



CONSTRUCTION of the Haichang Cultural Tourism complex project is to go ahead in Ningbo, in the Zhejiang province, China.

The project has an investment of CNY5 billion (US\$773.5m). The site will be focused on numerous themes and goals. These include "ocean and land life exploration and interaction, ecological conservation, all-age entertainment, high-tech performance, themed vacation, spa leisure and immersive tour."

The aim of the project is to create a leisure destination in Ningbo which features a leading marine and wetland theme.

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First Nickelodeon FEC opens in China

CHINA Leisure Development Co. (CLDC) has teamed up with ViacomCBS to create a Nickelodeon-themed family entertainment centre in Shenzhen, China. JRA, specialists in attraction design, were also called in to work on the design and development of the new FEC.

The 16,000sq.ft FEC features four attraction zones. One is themed on SpongeBob SquarePants, another on PAW Patrol, one on Dora the Explorer and the final zone is based on Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. The different worlds invite young guests join in with immersive play alongside their favourite characters. Visitors can also enjoy Nickelodeon branded retail and dine in a sit-down play café.

Colin Cronin, senior project director at JRA, commented: "JRA was honoured to work with China Leisure and Nickelodeon on the design and development of Nickelodeon's first FEC in China. It was a pleasure helping to bring SpongeBob, Dora, Donatello, Marshall and their friends to life and we hope the attraction delights visitors from Shenzhen and beyond."

World's biggest Octonauts attraction opens at Changfeng Ocean World

MERLIN Entertainments, a world leader in location-based entertainment, has teamed up with Silvergate Media to launch the largest Octonauts attraction in the world. The attraction is located at Changfeng Ocean World in Shanghai, part of the Sea Life aquarium chain.

The underwater Octonauts experience was launched on December 28, 2020, and is already making a big impact with visiting families.

Guests are immersed in the site's huge new Ray Bay area, where they embark on a real life immersive Octonauts adventure. Visitors are contained within an Octopod capsule, which is surrounded by a diverse display of marine life, including spotted eagle rays, cownose rays and tropical fish.

Visitors can enjoy meeting their favourite Octonauts characters, including Captain Barnacles and Kwazii and Peso and families learn about the oceans of the world and sea life preservation.

Matthew Williams, senior brand director midway at Merlin Entertainments, commented on the new attraction saying: "We are delighted to have opened the world's biggest Octonauts experience at Changfeng Ocean World in the fantastic new Ray Bay area, immersing families in a heroic underwater adventure with their favourite characters from the series."

"Octonauts is an ideal IP for Sea Life with fun and discovery at its core and we look forward to working with Silvergate to share more exciting and innovative themed Octonauts experiences with families at our aquariums around the globe," Williams added.



Hong Kong Disneyland reopened on February 19

HONG Kong Disneyland reopened its doors on February 19, with enhanced hygiene and safety measures that are in-line with the latest regulations and guidance from the government and health officials.

The enhanced measures include mandatory testing for cast members involved in operational activities every 14 days. Additional measures include visitors being required to scan the LeaveHomeSafe QR code or register their details, including name, contact number and time and date of visit, prior to entering the venue.

Other measures include temperature screening, mandatory wearing of face coverings, social distancing and increased cleaning and sanitisation.

Michael Moriarty, managing director of Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, commented: "From everyone at Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, we wish you good health, happiness and prosperity in the year of the Ox. Every cast member has been putting tremendous effort in preparing our park reopening."

Moriarty added that the park looks forward to welcoming guests to experience the magic of its 15th anniversary and the new Castle of Magical Dreams.



Chimelong Forest Park, Qingyuan, due to open in 2021

THE Chimelong Group, one of China's leading owners and operators of theme parks, has announced the Chimelong Forest Park, currently being developed in Qingyuan in the Guangzhou province of China, is expected to open in 2021.

Chimelong Forest Park will cover an area of around 600 million square metres, making the park nine times larger than the Chimelong Paradise attraction site in Panyu, Guangzhou.

Chimelong Forest Park will feature three themed zones, all with unique regional characteristics. As well as a huge forest park, the site will comprise commercial facilities, hotel accommodation, water conservation, gardens, adventure activities, a holiday community complex and more.





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WATERPARKS



American Wave Machines constructs PerfectSwell Shizunami

AMERICAN Wave Machines (AWM), a leading surf technology company, has constructed the PerfectSwell Shizunami in surf town Shizunami, Makinohara, Japan.

AWM worked in co-operation with licensee Surf Stadium Japan (SSJ) to overcome the supply chain and logistical challenges that reared their head while attempting to construct the system during a highly disruptive year. The civil work were, however, completed in a record 389 days.

The site incorporates a newly invented wave design feature known as Temporal Distortion, which allows for new dimensions of hydrodynamic control. Start-up tests of the system confirmed enhanced performance via upgrades to the system's power response. PerfectSwell Shizunami also shows how high-performance surf can be achieved in urban areas with smaller footprint locations.

Noting how surfing has been included in the Olympics, Bruce McFarland, founder of AWM, commented: "This is a watershed moment for the sport. PerfectSwell Shizunami provides a consistent platform for athlete training, exhibitions and events leading up to the Olympic Games."



Aqualand waterparks in France to be expanded with new rides

TWO Aqualand resorts in France are to undergo expansion with the addition of new slides and attractions. Aqualand Bassin D'Arcachon on the west coast and Aqualand St. Syr Sur Mer in the

South of France are each to get an upgrade.

Polin Waterparks is to work with Aqualand on the extension projects. Aqualand is Europe's largest waterpark chain, with sites in Spain, France and Portugal. The waterparks are owned by the Aspro Group, the largest waterpark and leisure park operator in Europe.

Aqualand Bassin D'Arcachon on France's Atlantic coast covers six acres. The site opened in 1985 and one of the main attractions at the park is Polin's Racer Hybrid waterslide, which features two double-tube slides that run side-by-side along a circular path.

Wilfred Lenandais, manager of the venue, commented: "We invested €1.5m for the 2021 additions. The new slides enhance the adrenaline throughout the park. We are very satisfied with the new rides."

Aqualand St. Syr Sur Mer can be found between Toulon and Marseilles. The waterpark was last updated and expanded in 2004 and the operator believes now is the right time to upgrade further in order to maintain its leading position in the sector. Polin has also been involved in the expansion projects at this park, including carrying out the installation of the Black Hole Turbulance waterslide.

Arihant Water Park Equipment wins 2020 CII Award

ARIHANT Water Park Equipment, a division of Arihant Industrial Corporation Ltd., which designs and manufactures water based attractions with immersive experiences, has won a highly prestigious 2020 CII Award.

It was the tenth edition of the CII Awards, which are organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry. The 2020 event was based on the theme of Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self Reliant India), which is a government initiative to create a self-sufficient India.

The judging panel comprised 16 well-known figures from the international design, research and development community, including personalities from Kenya, Japan and South Korea. The judges chose Arihant's Treasure Ship attraction as winner of a category comprising more than 20 shortlisted products.



The Treasure Ship was designed to break away from traditional water play systems. It is based on providing guests with an immersive experience themed on storytelling, designed to increase ROI for investors.

Kalpesh Mistry, head of innovation at Arihant, commented on winning the award. "We are extremely humbled to win this award. Traditionally, water play structures are designed with an 'engineering first, theme second' approach. We designed this product with a 'theme first, engineering second' approach.

"We wanted to come up with a revolutionary concept that was highly immersive, retaining consumers even outside normal play activities, to increase ROI," Mistry continued. "So, we created this mini waterpark that can do so much more for the park owners. This is the future of water play structures in India and the world."

Disney's Blizzard Beach waterpark opens up for 2021

DISNEY's Blizzard Beach waterpark at Walt Disney World in Florida, US, reopened on March 7.

The park is following the health and safety measures enforced at all Disney parks. These include a limited number of guests for reduced capacity, temperature screenings, physical distancing and the mandatory wearing of face masks.

Face coverings are required in designated areas in the waterpark, for visitors aged two and above. These areas include the entrance and exit to the venue, retail areas and dining points. Face masks cannot be worn in the water or on the water slides.

Blizzard Beach Waterpark originally opened on April 1, 1995. At the time, it was Disney's third waterpark.





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WATERPARKS



Paul Chutter appointed president of WhiteWater

PAUL Chutter has taken over from his father Geoff as president of WhiteWater.

Paul joined the family business in 2014, working in sales operations. He was soon

promoted to chief business development officer (CBDO), where he helped the company streamline processes, develop strategic alliances and played an instrumental role in bringing WhiteWater's technology arm, Vantage, to the market. He is also founder of Endless Surf which, just a year after its launch, has made significant strides in the surf pool market.

Now, not long after the family business celebrated its 40th anniversary on December 15, 2020, Paul Chutter has succeeded his father, Geoff Chutter, as president of WhiteWater, with the latter remaining CEO of the company.

One of Paul's first responsibilities in his new role was to focus on WhiteWater's leadership team. He recently announced some leadership changes, including Doug Smith stepping into the role of global head of sales and Franceen Gonzales being promoted to chief experience officer.

Commenting on the future of WhiteWater, Paul Chutter said: "What we do, together with our clients, is very significant – we make moments that bring families together, something everyone recognises and values more than ever after the past year. To be able to work alongside my father and ensure that continues long into the future is a huge responsibility and honour that I'm excited to take on."

As it enters its fifth decade, WhiteWater is focusing firmly on the future, as Geoff Chutter explained. "WhiteWater is a powerhouse in our industry because of our talented people and it is with tremendous pride I see Paul step into the role of president and announce these leadership changes. I know that we have the best team in the industry and together we will continue to deliver the very best products and guest experiences possible, working tirelessly to reward the trust our clients place in us."

Great Outdoors Waterpark to reopen for 2021 season

THE Great Outdoors Waterpark in Lafayette, Colorado, US, is scheduled to reopen for the 2021 season on May 29. It will operate from Memorial Day weekend until Labor Day.

The park will have strict health and safety measures in place in-line with COVID-19 operating guidelines. These include physical distancing, limited visitor capacity and data collection for contact tracing requirements.

Lafayette's mayor, Jamie Harkins, spoke of the imminent reopening of the much-loved waterpark, commenting: "While we are being very cautious to ensure waterpark operations will adhere to all Covid regulations and public health guidance, I think residents will be pleased to once again have access to this great community amenity," said Harkins.

The Great Outdoors Waterpark will be open for five days a week, providing three two-hour swim sessions between the hours of 10am and 6pm. It will be closed on Tuesdays and Thursdays.



ProSlide launches new website showcasing 35 years of industry innovation

PROSLIDE, leaders in the design and manufacture of water rides and attractions, has launched a new website. The site is designed to provide visitors with a user-friendly experience as they navigate their way through ProSlide's full product portfolio.

The website showcases the company's many iconic industry innovations over the 35 years ProSlide has been serving the water ride sector.

Ray Smegal, COO at ProSlide, commented: "The new ProSlide website is a showcase of our newest water ride technology and the global projects that are transforming waterparks. It's a celebration of our industry and a roadmap to expanding and developing the next, great water parks around the world."

The innovative and user-friendly new features on the website include look-ahead navigation, which reduces the number of users' clicks to navigate the site. Product filters is another key feature, enabling users to narrow down the product portfolio by selecting key performance attributes the product they are looking for needs to have.

Whales: Living with Giants exhibit coming to Clearwater Marine Aquarium



A NEW exhibit is coming to Clearwater Marine Aquarium, the non-profit aquarium in Clearwater, Florida dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and release of sick and injured marine animals.

The Whales: Living with Giants exhibit is a fully immersive experience that allows visitors to get up close to whales. The exhibition will feature multi-media exhibits, a life-sized walk-through whale gallery and a virtual reality experience.

A theatre will showcase films and speakers presenting on issues facing whales. There will also be an interactive zone for children to keep young visitors entertained and engaged.

Dr. James Powell, executive director of CMA's Research Institute, commented on the new display at Clearwater Marine Aquarium: "This exhibit brings our guests into an undersea experience where they come eye to eye with a wide variety of whale species found in Florida waters.

"It's especially timely with the recent ground-breaking discovery of an entirely new whale species not far from CMA off the Florida gulf coast," Dr. Powell added.

Whales: Living with Giants is debuting on March 13 and will run until August 31, 2021.



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How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on the waterpark sector?

Image courtesy Aquatic Development Group

The global pandemic has hit all areas of the industry hard over the past 12 months and as lockdowns and restrictions continue, **Beth Whittaker** spoke with the World Waterpark Association, along with a selection of leading suppliers to the waterpark sector, to find out how both operators and suppliers have coped so far and what planning for the future now looks like for this side of the business

TWELVE months on and here we are, still in the tight grips of a global pandemic, the majority of the world living life under some sort of lockdown, with only pockets of “normal life” resumed. It is safe to say it has been a testing year for everyone and never has the term Groundhog Day been more appropriate. However, with vaccines now being rolled out in many countries, there is hope that happier, healthier and, let’s be honest, more interesting times are ahead of us!

Like many industries, the amusement sector relies on swathes of people gathering in the same place at the same time in order to succeed and so the big question is how do we keep business going in a time when this very scenario is completely unthinkable. The fact many of our venues are outdoors is one thing we can at least be thankful for, but how will operators and park staff facilitate social distancing, counter act reduced visitor capacity, implement sanitation and so on? How do we keep staff and visitors safe while we wait for this pandemic to blow over? One answer is lock

everything and everyone down – the situation in the UK at the time of writing – but I think we all understand by now that this is not a long-term solution and the implications this has on industry, no matter the sector.

With the amusements and attractions industry made up of various areas of business, in this article we take a closer look at how the waterpark sector specifically has coped over the past 12 months and what a COVID-shaped future looks like. We started by speaking with Aleatha Ezra of the World Waterpark Association.

“We began hearing about the impact of COVID-19 in January 2020 as some of our international waterpark operators began to shut down to slow the spread of the virus in Asian markets,” she says. “As the virus moved into North America in February, we shifted our focus to being the industry’s go-to resource for finding vetted, trustworthy information about the COVID-19 pandemic – on how the virus is spread, what guidance the US CDC and WHO

were providing and how waterpark operators could hope to safely reopen when they received approval from their local health officials. Our COVID-19 Resources page quickly became our most visited page on waterparks.org.

"Truly, the impact of the pandemic has been global," Ezra continued. "Across the six continents where waterparks currently exist, we are not aware of any region that has not dealt with some sort of lockdown, closure, capacity restriction or other safety protocol implementation. All who are working within the water leisure industry have had to make major adjustments to their operating plans in order to consider reopening to their guests.

"Park operators did a variety of things in order to reopen for the 2020 season, including implementing social distancing throughout the park, requiring advance ticket purchases, using in-park apps to track who was in the park at any given time, offering F&B as a carryout option, using temperature checks for employees and guests and many more examples. Some areas were not able to reopen at all. For those that did reopen, we heard from a number of them that guests did return but in smaller numbers. And those that visited parks



Image courtesy Arihant Water Park Equipment

were inclined to spend money on services that improved their visit – such as cabanas or preset food and beverage packages resulting in higher per-caps for the parks.

"There is no doubt that the human and financial cost created by the last 12 months of business interruption is going to limit a park's ability to expand for some period of time," Ezra added. "Waterpark operators will need to continue to find ways to move forward with less funds and fewer team members. Entertainment is usually funded out of discretionary income and until the economy fully bounces back, it will be tough for our industry to return to 100 per cent.

Image courtesy Duinrell





Image courtesy
Holiday World and
Splashin' Safari/
ProSlide

"Perhaps the most difficult challenge of the past 12 months has been navigating a constantly changing landscape and not having firm answers to the big questions like: Will my family and I be able to stay healthy? Will I be able to reopen at some point in 2020? Can I keep my guests and employees safe when I do reopen? Will there be government-provided funds to help my business stay afloat even if I cannot reopen? The necessity to pivot planning at a moment's notice became second nature to everyone working within any business sector. The WWA has worked hard to be a consistent, trustworthy resource. We've provided a wide range of member programmes and services that connected our members and kept the industry moving forward with as much clarity as possible. In addition, we hosted our annual show virtually in October, which offered attendees from 17+ countries more than 50 hours of time to learn, benchmark the latest best practices and engage during live chats with fellow owners, operators, designers, suppliers and developers."

Based in Turkey, Sohret Pakis, director of marketing and communications at Polin Waterparks, tells InterPark that while the first case of COVID-19 in Turkey was officially declared by the Ministry of Health on March 10, 2020, Polin itself started to take precautions much earlier than this and within the company's factory, has taken every precaution to ensure the health and safety of the employees who are responsible for physically creating and delivering Polin's products.

"To ensure their safety in fulfilling this goal, we have implemented all recommendations from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and local authorities regarding safe health and hygiene practices," Pakis says. "This includes the use of disposable masks and gloves, disinfecting after each work shift, daily temperature checks and

easily accessible hand sanitisers. We have also put social-distancing measures in place among these staff members, so they are protected as much as possible from the virus.

"As circumstances continue to change, we will modify all operations necessary to maintain our commitment to our team's safety and health. They are our priority and we are committed to taking care of them. We are incredibly grateful to our entire team of dedicated employees who have taken on these challenges with positivity and perseverance."

Commenting on the economic impact of the coronavirus, for Pakis, she expects it to be far-reaching, telling InterPark: "Some of our projects have been postponed, but some continue and we also continue to sign new project contracts. We have never stopped and during the outbreak, we have completed 57 waterpark projects worldwide from France to Russia, from China to Vietnam, from Bulgaria to Poland. And we are so proud to tell you that we have installed the very first glassy waterslide – the world's first fully transparent composite Looping Rocket waterslide."

For Canadian supplier Whitewater West, as countries around the world went into global shutdowns, the team had to change how they operated across borders. "With sailing routes and ground shipping heavily affected, the pandemic forced us to tackle the challenging task of moving projects forward and staying on schedule," says the company's Cassidy Newman. "Not only did moving fiberglass and materials become difficult, but with temporary restraints in place, it also became difficult for our global installation teams to get on-site to commission and install our projects with laws around who could and could not enter specific countries. With more structure governing how we could function, the pandemic taught us to improve communication, data and information sharing across borders and global supply chains.

"One of the most significant changes that has happened during this odd year is that we experienced the digitisation of previously manual tasks, such as document printing, authentication and distribution. With different restrictions in each county, our team used the last year to focus on supply chain optimisation, further development of ERP, warehouse and transport module integration and designing and refining processes, all of which will allow us to be even more agile and resilient in the future."

Also headquartered in Canada is waterpark supplier ProSlide, the company's Andrew Soobrian telling InterPark how, for them, the pandemic has highlighted how important trade shows are.

"It has been something of a challenge for us," he says. "These events have always been a major opportunity for ProSlide to meet new people, while also checking in with our global clients and partners. Online conferences like Blooloo's V-Expo and increasing communication with our clients have been a major help in navigating the lack of trade shows, but we can't wait until we're able to attend them again."

"We first felt the effects of the pandemic in March 2020 when the provincial lockdown began in Ontario. Since then, most of our employees have been working from home with a rotation of employees entering the office when social distancing can be respected. For keeping in touch with our clients, we've been relying heavily on video conferencing tools more than ever. We're still able to see many of them, but it's safe to say we've all become more familiar with Zoom this past year. It's definitely been a challenge to adapt to this new way of working, but the ProSlide team is really agile and able to adapt. We're proud to say that we're still there for our clients even during these challenging times."

Over in neighbouring USA, where there have been particularly high levels of COVID-19 cases, for Aquatic Development Group CEO Ken Ellis while the pandemic has been tough on the industry as a whole, he tells InterPark "a lot of suppliers still had a good 2020 with projects already booked in; however 2021 will be harder for suppliers but better for operators. The supplier /vendor side will see a bit hit until 2022/23," he says. "Pre-development work is what

we are concentrating on at the moment. Resorts and hotels have been hit particularly hard, while projects in areas with larger demographic areas might have done okay due to a large market they could draw from. We are anticipating that a lot of people will be ready to hit the slides once waterparks are given the 'okay' to open this year. A good example of this is that skiing is going mad here in the New York area (at the time of writing); there is limited capacity but they are selling out every weekend.

"On a positive side, the pandemic has allowed us to pivot and look at other areas where we can better supply/help our clients on their projects and get them open for the season. We've also expanded the industries that we are providing recreational water to – we're seeing a rise in campgrounds, RV parks and casinos. We are always looking for the next 'big thing' and where our experience/innovation will take us."

For Arihant's Darpan Shah, the impact of the pandemic was felt in a big way even before it actually hit India where the company is based, with projects in Europe and the ROW getting delayed and project schedules definitely impacted.

"As an action plan we immediately reached out to our customers to let them know we're in this together and that we will support them through this crisis," Shah tells InterPark. "This took some of the pressure off our customers as we worked closely with them to re-align workflows."

"Having said that, while investments in park expansions have taken a hit due to the revenue impact the parks have

Image courtesy
Polin Waterparks





Image courtesy
Cedar Point

had, the investment into building new parks has been okay because investors with a long-term vision see this as a short-term hitch and have been moving forward. They, like us, believe there will be a huge pent up demand for family entertainment waiting to be realised at the end of all of this. Our projects in countries like Kuwait, Africa, Australia, UK, Sri Lanka and India to name a few, are still moving forward.

"While the leisure industry will be affected in the short term due to restrictions on travel, we are confident the industry will bounce back stronger. Our industry gives a reason to families to spend time together and share their joy. It is a fundamental human need so the need for such an 'escape' will surely get stronger after the pandemic. Having said that, there has been a big shift in consumer preferences for entertainment, content and expected safety and hygiene levels. Our industry will have to re-imagine the experiences they are offering to their guests and ensure they stay relevant for the fast evolving consumer."

As waterparks began to put parameters in place and looked to open their parks, it became apparent that each region of the world had been impacted by the pandemic differently as WhiterWater West highlighted to InterPark, with Newman explaining: "In China, for example, the country bounced back quickly, even holding industry events in person as early as October of 2020 with hundreds of people gathering in Beijing for the China Attractions Expo held by the China Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (CAAPA). While many North American parks delayed opening their latest attractions, China went ahead

with most of their openings with special parameters in place, including capacity restrictions, temperature checks and physical distancing. Adventure Bay in Xiangyang, for example, opened the world's first Orbiter in the middle of the pandemic in July of 2020. The park was able to open and have a profitable summer season despite much of the rest of the world still being under a government lockdown.

"Theme parks in the Middle East were also able to open quite quickly," Newman continued. "While some projects saw the difficulty in getting installers to their remote areas, Dubai and the UAE saw projects reach completion; and, in February of 2021, the team at Le Meridien Mina Seyahi Beach Resort and Marina in Dubai was able to open a brand-new waterpark. Offering a mixture of waterslides and an AquaPlay unit, the Jungle Bay waterpark points towards the future potential of the industry as we come out of the pandemic. Despite the pandemic where many projects have become more flexible with their schedules, we are seeing hospitality projects pick up speed and an increased interest from the hotel and resort market as waterparks are increasingly becoming popular with properties as they look for ways to differentiate themselves for when tourism has fully reopened.

"Of course, park development is a long view investment and new green field projects have continued with timing unaffected by the pandemic. Several significant new park openings will be ready in time to enjoy the bounce back including the Karisma Rivera Maya Nickelodeon Hotel and Resort in Mexico, Splash Island Waterpark Jeddah in Saudi Arabia and Phu Quoc in Vietnam."

For ProSlide, the reaction it has seen from its clients and the industry as a whole has been one of adaptation, with Soobrian highlighting: "Many of our partners and customers have had to learn different ways to operate and adopt new practices, with some continuing with construction projects but keeping social distancing in mind. We've seen a lot of people communicating amazement and encouragement at parks that have closed and then been able to safely reopen at full or reduced capacity. Things are different, but everyone recognises the monumental efforts of people in the industry to support the park operators when they need it."

And for Polin's Sohret Pakis, there were two routes they could take in order to overcome the situation the company found itself in – both from a business perspective and personally – to be the victim and complain or be the executor, accept the situation and in some way, see it as a gift, she tells InterPark.



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"We believe obstacles are a path you have to overcome," Pakis says. "Despite all the difficulties, we chose to be the executer of the situation and just as importantly as fulfilling business commitments, at Polin we made sure we stayed connected as we face this difficult time together. Internally and externally, we have tried our best to help our society and worked in accordance with NGOs, we have done social media campaigns to give hope and support to all medical heroes and we totally believe it will take all of us, working together, supporting one another and caring for all. We remain in this together. And we know we will overcome this together."

"We are looking forward to a future of fun and smiles and memorable experiences for everyone in our attractions and recreation community where we have always valued connection."

At Arihant, the pandemic has given the company the opportunity to work closely with local authorities to help the local community around it, specifically opening its kitchen facilities to prepare meals for the needy, supplying over 150,000 meals during the initial days of the pandemic. From a business perspective, the pandemic has allowed Arihant to look at how it meets with clients and prospects, along with managing day-to-day operations.

"While there have been challenges during this time, we think the team has really done a great job in understanding the circumstances and given their best," says Shah. "As we observed, empathy has increased in every team and we see

a greater respect for every member's unique challenges. Efficiency and remote collaboration has improved; it has made us much more efficient operationally."

To conclude on a positive note, the events of the past year have highlighted something we have always known about our industry, according to Aleatha Ezra. "When creative thinking or innovative problem-solving is needed, our industry members are more than up to the task to respond in ways that keep safety at the top of their mind," she says. "We're fortunate that the water leisure industry is already fully committed to sharing operational best practices and lessons learned with each other. If you give them a means to connect with each other, they will collaborate and craft solutions to anyone's challenges because they know that what benefits one will benefit all. We've seen operators share their entire reopening plans with others who have not yet reopened so that they can avoid some of the early operational missteps."

"We've watched as our owners, operators, designers and developers have continued to move ahead by 'playing the hand they were dealt,' which at the least has shown how resilient this industry is in the face of huge challenges. No-one anticipated a global pandemic of this size and length hitting the leisure market in 2020. Industry professionals have done whatever they could to refine their operation and stay financially afloat so that they may once again provide much-needed entertainment to families around the world."

Image courtesy
Whitewater West



Creating a connected guest experience for the new normal

By Emma Jones,
head of marketing,
Attractions.io

JOHN F. Kennedy once remarked, "The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word 'crisis.' One brush stroke stands for danger; the other for opportunity." The US president was not precisely accurate linguistically, but his sentiment was valuable and is particularly relevant today. While COVID-19 has shaken our industry to the core, it will also leave attractions with a surprisingly positive legacy – a clearer picture of the path to long-term growth.

As businesses across our industry continue to take bold steps to ensure their short-term viability, they are simultaneously preparing themselves for a more prosperous future. Many of the critical actions taken to mitigate the ongoing hit to visitor numbers will also bring our industry up to speed with the latest guest trends and expectations. It's also important to remember that attractions aren't alone in this process. In a recent McKinsey survey of over 200 businesses, across a range of sectors, more than 90 per cent of business leaders say that COVID-19 will fundamentally change their business operations for at least the next five years.

Across our industry, the pandemic has forced attractions to recognise the need for connected experiences that

improve their bottom line and engage new generations of guests. Doing so means increasing how and where you use digital technology within your attraction. We feel that the current drive towards digital technology presents a unique window of opportunity for attractions to get ahead of changing guest demands and catalyse sustainable long-term growth.

Changing old habits

As much as the pandemic has turned "business as usual" upside down, it has also brought forward trends and behaviours already in place. For many guests, the experience of visiting an attraction, be it a museum, a theme park or a zoo, was already falling behind their expectations compared to digital alternatives.

Now, however, thanks to more capable digital technology, attractions have an opportunity to re-engage guests with their experiences by integrating new layers of digital technology into their operations. By streamlining the visitor experience and reducing guest friction points, smart technology use ultimately enables a rejuvenated attraction experience.

Attractions can use digital technology to:

- Create an efficient online booking process that then enables guests to gain access to attractions via their mobile devices.
- Make long queues virtual by enabling virtual queuing.
- Give guests access to smart on-site mapping that shows them where to go (or where they are!)
- Allow guests to order and collect food whenever and wherever they want.

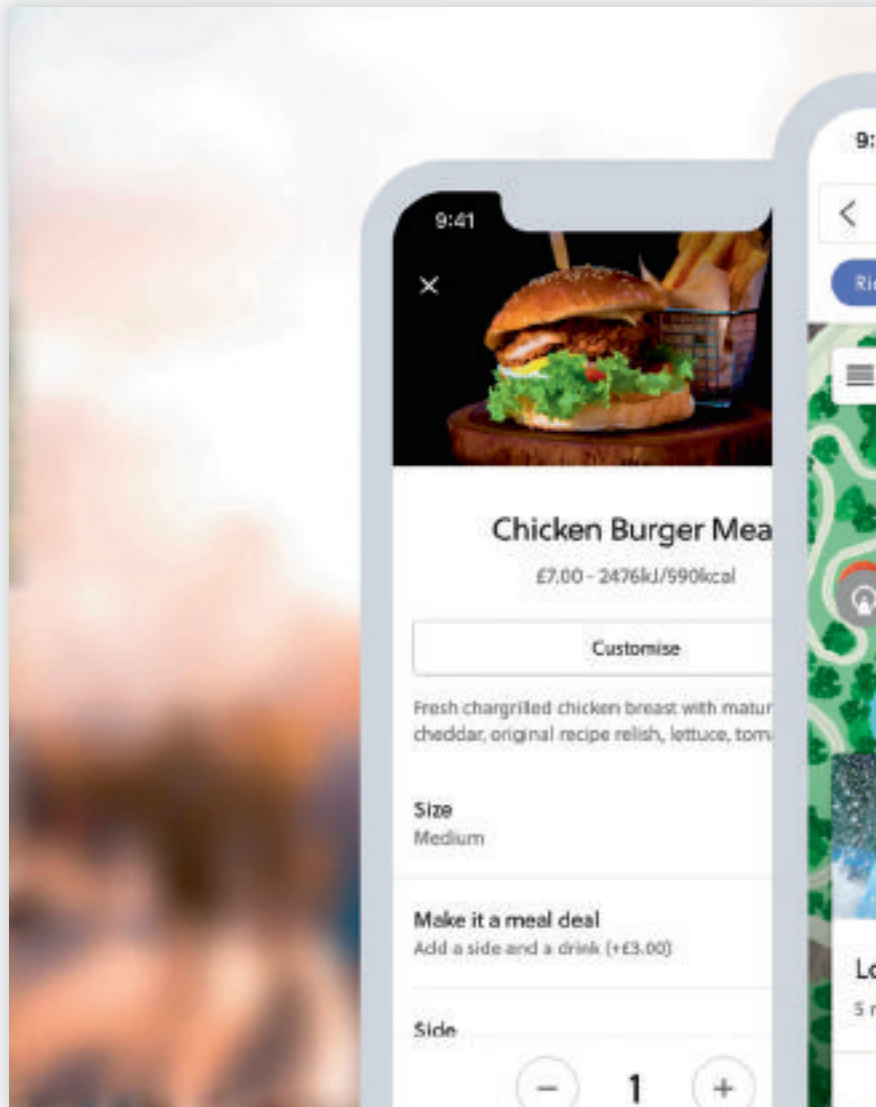
While guests may not have expected attractions to deliver a personalised and seamless experience in the past, the world has changed. Today, guests delight in being able to have a similarly connected, effortless and satisfying experience at your attraction as they might get from a video streaming service or digital gaming. Attractions that can meet and exceed these expectations will rapidly engage new audiences, reconnect with old ones and gather positive reviews on social media and TripAdvisor.

However, when it comes to creating a truly effective digital experience at your attraction, it needs to be rolled out in more than just a few standalone sections of the visitor experience. Instead, digitisation and a connected guest experience is something that needs to happen across all touchpoints.

While most attractions excel at providing plenty of digital touchpoints for the “before visit” and “post-visit” stages of the guest journey, they often fall behind when it comes to keeping up with their guests while they’re on-site. Not only can this disjointed experience leave visitors in the dark about important changes to rides, exhibitions and shows, it also removes attractions’ ability to influence their guests’ behaviour on-site and collate valuable data. A disjointed experience serves neither guests nor attractions.

Creating a genuinely connected experience for guests

To see an example of a connected guest experience in practice, look no further than Disney. Disney’s theme parks’ metaverse is all about linking together digital and physical experiences that are social and personalised. According to Tilak Mandadi, executive vice-president, digital and chief technology officer for Disney Parks, Experiences and Products, this “is where physical and digital worlds converge, with wearables, smartphones



and digital access points immersing the guests in the metaverse experience.” (See article on Page 39 of this issue of InterPark for a more detailed insight into Disney’s metaverse strategy).

However, as impressive as Disney’s metaverse is, attractions don’t need a Disney sized budget to create a great connected experience for their guests. A torrent of innovation in the digital space has made smart technology more accessible and affordable than ever

before. That being said, deploying technology effectively still requires careful planning.

To help attractions make the most of the opportunity that digital technology presents, here are some quick tips:

■ **Involve your entire operation when getting started**

A connected guest experience needs to start with a connected organisational approach.

Your attraction should begin by creating a cross-

experience might lie and map them against opportunities for improvement with digital technology.

■ **Focus investment in the right areas**

Your project's success will ultimately depend on finding out where your efforts need to go and not wasting your team's resources in the wrong places.

To determine where investment needs to be maximised, start by identifying which digital channels are available for engaging guests at each step of their journey. Then prioritise

the actions you could take for each one by plotting the cost of any action against what impact it might have on metrics like guest satisfaction, revenue generation and data collection.

When trying to figure out what kind of return on investment your actions might deliver, it's important to remember the holistic benefits that digital transformation can drive. For example, while a feature like mobile food ordering can improve guest satisfaction, it can also drive insights (by gathering details on guest purchase history) and increase revenue (by allowing in-basket upgrades and increasing order size).

■ **Measure the results**

Setting the criteria and mechanism for measuring impact is something you need to do from the initiative's outset. For example, if you plan to roll out a mobile food ordering feature based on a desire to improve guest satisfaction, you should plan on adding a question about mobile food ordering to your feedback survey from day one.

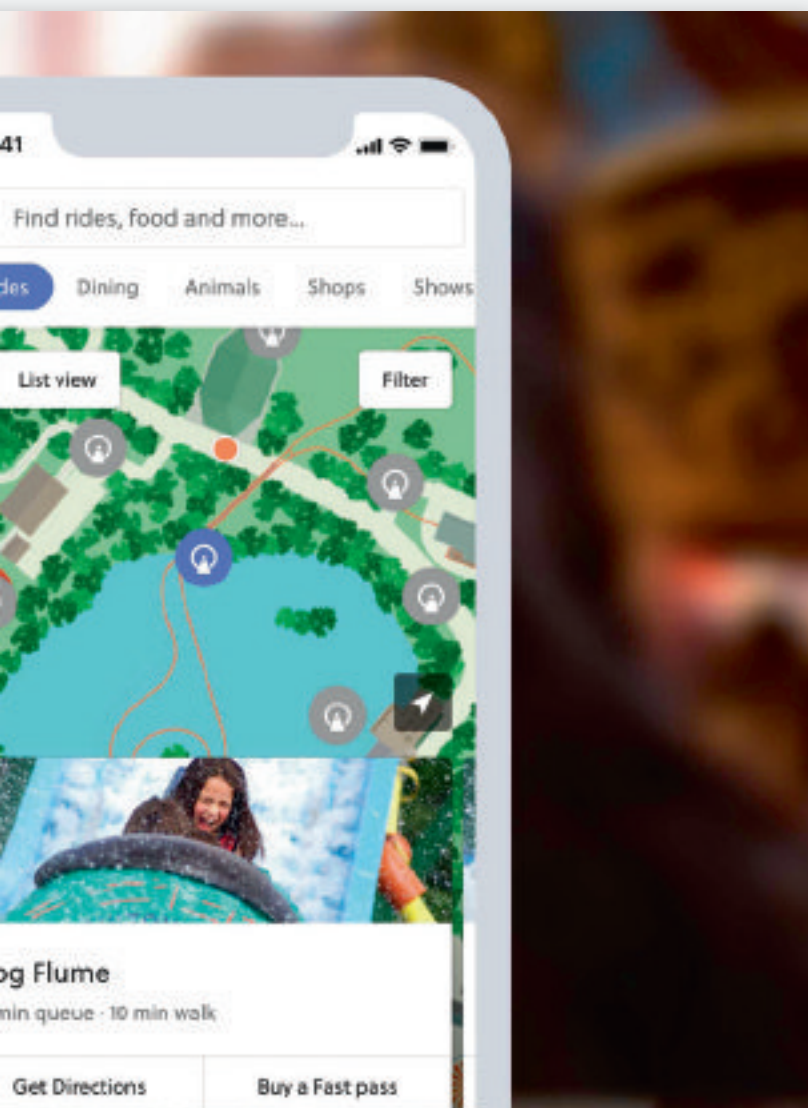
Measuring each part of your initiative's success or failure will pay dividends for your business. This is because being able to measure impact quantitatively is a crucial step towards making smart data-driven decisions.

■ **Map out your guest journey**

The key to making your guest experience better is finding out where your guests go and when. Here, a good idea is to figure out where the points of friction in a visitor's

Leveraging technology to create a connected digital experience

Tying together the entire guest journey and meeting the changing demands of a new type of guest can seem like an



functional project team. Marketing, sales and operations – every department within your attraction – can benefit from a better guest experience and, ideally, should have a say in what it includes and how it looks.



impossible, or at least costly, task. Fortunately, attractions can leverage an increasingly powerful piece of technology that guests bring with them everywhere – the smartphone.

In the UK, more than 95 per cent of Millennials and Generation Z own a smartphone compared with 80 per cent of Baby Boomers. Used to on-demand streaming services and product recommendations when shopping online, Millennials and Generation Z expect the same personalised experience from attractions.

Future generations of guests are more likely to forget their house keys than their phone. To leverage this ubiquitous device, which the average adult spends around three hours per day using, your attraction can use a branded mobile app. As a digital tool that encompasses all the touchpoints in the guest journey, including the pre, during and post stages of guests' attraction experiences, a smartphone can unlock a world of connected experiences for your guests.

From making tickets pre-bookable online to allowing your guests to plan their day on site with smart navigation, virtual queueing and personalised push messages, an app is a multi-stage and multi-channel tool. After their visit, attractions can send guests promotional offers that encourage their return. And crucially for your attraction, visitors engaged with guest apps leave behind a mountain of smart, easily understandable data to help you grow.

Going into 2021, we're optimistic about the next chapter for our industry. Although there is still some uncertainty on the horizon, there are also plenty of opportunities. We're confident that these challenges will make our industry even stronger and more relevant and we're excited to see the technology shifting its role from supporting social distancing to delivering ongoing guest experience improvements

To quote Joe Pine, author of *The Experience Economy*, an app allows people "to centre the universe around us, personally." We believe leveraging mobile app technology is vital to creating a true connected guest experience. As we move towards an increasingly digitised future, attractions have a real opportunity to future-proof their operations and get ready for a new era of guest experiences.

Attractions.io was founded in 2009, since when it has been committed to delivering the best mobile experience for attraction visitors and operators. The company has helped attractions change the way they use technology and has pioneered improved visitor experiences for some of the best-known brands in the out-of-home entertainment space. Through a branded mobile app and a powerful back-end platform, Attractions.io empowers visitor attractions to increase guest satisfaction, grow revenue and unlock visitor insights.

Disney Parks and Experiences outlines expansive 'metaverse' strategy

By Michael Mascioni

THERE has been considerable speculation in recent years about overarching plans Disney Parks might have to integrate such exponential technologies as AI, augmented reality and the Internet of Things on a larger scale in its parks. Late last year, the company unveiled its broad "metaverse" strategy, which gave more glimpses into its possible expanded use of those kinds of technologies in its parks.

Tilak Mandadi, executive vice-president, digital and global chief technology officer for Disney Parks, Experiences and Products, provides more background on the development of that strategy. "The storytelling approach in our parks has always been evolving: from classic, linear storytelling, to interactive storytelling and then to immersive storytelling, which you experience when you visit Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge, for example," he tells InterPark. "Now, we're well on our way to personalised and social storytelling, made possible by the concept we call the 'theme park metaverse.' It all starts with a connected park, where guests can interact with their physical surroundings using connected devices, such as wearables, phones and other interactive digital access points. When you add technologies such as computer vision, natural language understanding, augmented reality, artificial intelligence and IoT, you can seamlessly bring together the physical environment with the digital world to create special new experiences. For example, we're asking ourselves questions like, what if you could interact with AI-driven virtual characters?"

"In years to come," he continues, "our guests will encounter metaverse experiences both inside and outside our parks – starting with Star Wars: Galactic Starcruiser and other new offerings on the horizon. Even when these technologies are applied in our parks, they may not be obvious to our guests. We bring stories to life and the technology that makes them possible is often invisible, by design."

According to Mandadi, "we're already exploring ways to unlock the metaverse across our portfolio of Disney experiences. Many of our guests are familiar with early examples of our approach to fusing the physical and the digital. For example, the Disney Cruise Line original stage show *Frozen, A Musical Spectacular*, blends traditional theatre techniques with state-of-the-art technology to create the frozen world of Arendelle. The combination of motion-tracking video graphics with large-scale mobile set pieces helps completely immerse our guests in the world of *Frozen*. With advances in technology, we can dream up even more ambitious experiences for our Disney destinations."

As Disney has already indicated, augmented reality will be a key part of its metaverse strategy. Mandadi notes that "in our parks, the focus is on enhanced 'heads-up' experiences aided by augmented reality and mixed reality. The convergence of physical and digital worlds remains our primary focus, but we can also look outside the berm, extending the magic of Disney parks to the home using the same technologies.

"Expanding our reach, telling diverse and inclusive stories and extending the magic to points well beyond our park gates are big priorities for us. One of the greatest advantages of digital-driven metaverse experiences is the ability to quickly change the experiences to ensure their continuing freshness and relevance and the ability to personalise them using data," he says.

Mandadi sums up the metaverse's role in enhancing storytelling in Disney parks and beyond: "The metaverse allows people to play established roles and even better, be themselves and create roles for themselves in the overall story. That is the key to metaverse personalisation."

Unsurprisingly, Disney's metaverse strategy is also designed to enhance its park gamification experiences. As Mandadi notes, "our guests are already using the Play Disney Parks App to explore our parks in a whole new way and we're always introducing special new activities in the app to immerse our guests in their favourite stories. It is a perfect platform for some of the unforgettable metaverse experiences coming to the parks – but the metaverse can live beyond it, as well."

According to Mandadi, although Disney Parks "doesn't have any immediate plans involving drones, the metaverse is driven by advances in technology and digital combined with next generation storytelling. We will keep an eye on all emerging technologies and constantly explore how to enhance our storytelling."

Disney's holistic approach to the metaverse affords insights into more far reaching innovations in park experiences and highlights the increasing impact of blended physical and digital experiences in parks.



Tilak Mandadi

Image courtesy
Disney Parks,
Experiences and
Products

Key Chinese park industry players sign strategic co-operation agreement

WITH gatherings restricted and parks closed, it was an extremely depressing and gloomy year in 2020 throughout the world. Yet as 2020 drew to a close, there was at last some exciting news revealed by two major players in the Chinese theme park industry.



Deng Zhiyi, chairman of the board, Jinma Rides (left) and Liu Guanhua, chairman of the board, Happy Valley Group

On the night of December 28, senior management from Jinma Rides and Happy Valley, sitting together in OCT's spacious meeting room, mask-free, witnessed the signing of a strategic co-operation framework agreement between the two companies. And it is an interesting framework.

Happy Valley Group is OCT's cultural tourism arm and was one of the early pioneers venturing into China's theme park industry. Currently it operates a number of popular theme parks in the country's major cities.

Meanwhile, Jinma is a major amusement ride manufacturer in China, the company having played a dominant role in China's attraction supply market for a number of years. Listed on Shenzhen Stock Exchange in late 2018, it is able to tap deep into the capital market to acquire vast funds for its future plans and developments.

Under the ambitious framework agreement confirmed in December, Jinma and Happy Valley plan to work together to tailor-make amusement products specifically for a high-end market and seek to build a robust development platform for the theme park industry as a whole.

According to disclosures from the meeting, the two companies plan to introduce new concepts and technologies into product innovation and development with



Representatives from Jinma Rides and Happy Valley Group meet to discuss the strategic co-operation agreement between the two organisations



Li Kehui, general manager, Happy Valley Group (left) and Liu XiWang, general manager, Jinma Rides sign the co-operation agreement

a specific focus on the park operator's market positioning and target consumer's consumption experience. To elaborate, under the agreement, existing amusement rides will be upgraded by adopting new technologies. New rides with Happy Valley's IPs will be customised and developed. Cultural projects utilising the latest and advanced digital technologies will be jointly developed, the end result being that the two organisations will together build-up a number of immersive or interactive red culture parks or traditional culture centres in the near future.

As for the development platform build-up, the two sides vow to respond to a state-advocated "Dual Cycle" development model, by promoting amusement product and park upgrading as well as branching out internationally. And if all goes to plan, it may see some Chinese park brands going global which would be an interesting development. The two parties also plan to make full use of Internet, Internet of Things (IoT) and 5G technology to create a network for the theme park industry.

Deng Zhiyi, chairman of Jinma Rides, commented: "We have signed this strategic co-operation framework agreement in the best interests and for the benefit of both companies. It will allow us to exploit our respective advantages, carry out deep co-operation in technology innovation for domestic high-end amusement projects, product research and development, park planning and construction, operation management and other fields. Our resources can be pooled together to steer the industry towards a sustainable and healthy development."

And Zhiyi's counterpart Liu Guanhua, chairman of Happy Valley Group, added: "Under the background of the 'Dual Cycle' growth model, this signing event is a milestone for

our two companies to further deepen co-operation." He hopes that the two companies can work together to build a broad development platform with a strong alliance, complementary advantages and mutual benefits and jointly contribute to the innovation and development of China's theme park industry.

Name change better reflects Jinma's scope and global strategy

LATE last month, Jinma announced that it had completed the formalities required for a change of the company's name and officially started operating businesses under the new name, Guangdong Jinma Entertainment Corp., Ltd.

The company was formerly known as Jinma Technology Entertainment Corp., Ltd. As it disclosed on its website, this rebranding "is meant to accurately reflect the company's business scope and its global product strategy and vision."

Jinma is currently the largest amusement ride manufacturer in China. It was listed on the Shenzhen Stock Exchange (SZSE) in late 2018. Jinma is a true example of the fast growth of China's amusement park industry in the past few decades and benefits from being able to "seize the moment" and be adaptive when demands for amusement ride equipment are very high, thanks to large funds being poured into this vast market by both domestic and international investors.



Jinma has been a stable ride supplier to Chinese amusement park operators, including Happy Valley, Fanta and OCT, for many years. It has also worked with a number of world-renowned park operators on various projects.



Why guest service training doesn't work

By Chris Smoje

I HAVE been referred to as a customer service trainer for years – in fact it's been my main profession. So when I write this article with the title *Why customer service training doesn't work* I think I need to explain myself.

As a learning professional, training is an integral part of skill development. The problem is that customer service is often seen as a skill (i.e. something that we can visually see from a performance perspective) and not something that is inherently part of who we are as a person.

It is therefore difficult to apply the same "rigor" that you would normally apply to other training courses to customer service programmes. For example, most people would have no problem understanding the clear-cut nature of going on a course for CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). You learn exactly how to perform CPR. And when you leave the classroom you do exactly what you were taught in the training. In other words, you apply the exact compression to breath ratios in the technique as specified.

Whether you like it or not, customer service simply doesn't have a skill with the same applicability – there are different ways service can be delivered depending on the specific customer's situation and their emotions at the time. There is no silver bullet and no training course on skill can magically make service work all the time.

To expand on this further, training often teaches us to communicate better with customers. This advice can be highly detrimental for the business and specific staff members. The rise of the mobile phone and social media have made it almost unnatural to not be on your phone while waiting in a queue. As customers are served they will often be patiently on their phones and not want any

interaction while they wait. Now, there are huge benefits with interaction between team members and customers, but that's not the point here. When customers keep looking down at their phones and staff don't get a word out of them, they often become critical and think the customers are being rude. So this is an example of how training someone to have a conversation with a customer can lead to disappointment when the customer doesn't want to have a conversation the other way.

The second problem with training is the high-level philosophies that also sound good in principle but mean virtually nothing. In fact, you could actually string together every philosophy on guest service and put it into one fluffy sentence, like so:

It's time to **raise the bar** for customer service,
Because the **customer is king**,
Let's go out there and **surprise and delight** our customers,
By **exceeding their expectations**,
And going **above and beyond**,
Creating '**wow**' moments,
Because the **customer is always right**.

I'm no poet, but I think that sounds pretty cool! These well intended phrases are not new, in fact they are overused and have completely lost their meaning. They sound good in theory but from an applicability perspective they offer nothing. For example, what about customers that want their expectations met, but not exceeded? How does a 17-year-old surprise a customer? What if the customer isn't right? And if a customer is king, does that mean the

staff are their slaves? This makes it extremely difficult to make any progress in a training situation. In fact sometimes it's good to start off a training session exploring these statements to start debunking these old fashioned myths.

If I can go back to a comment I made previously, I said there was no silver bullet and that customer service needs to adapt to the specific situation and the specific customer. This could virtually mean that the ability to deliver effective service can be different each time (which is true). There is no way to have a crystal ball in these situations and the strategy for dealing with this is too big for the remainder of this article. But the best way to get our heads around giving exceptional service to customers is to ask ourselves the following four questions:

- What do you consider to be exceptional customer service?
- What is the best customer service you have ever received?
- What do you consider to be poor service?
- What is the worst customer service you have ever received?

If you do the exercise properly you answer each question in that order and don't see the second question until you answer the first. What normally happens is you end up with four completely different answers – which are specific to you only.

This helps us expand our minds to realise that even personally, we have different views on service, so of course our customers would too. We can then get to a point where we "think" every time we serve another person about what should be done with a specific situation.

My last attempt at a poem or quote was full of clichés, so I'd like to finish off with a great quote that really summarises the point of this article. It's from Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon. He said: "One thing I love about customers is that they are divinely discontent. It's human nature. We didn't ascend from our hunter-gather days by being satisfied. People have a voracious appetite for a better way. I see that cycle of improvement happening at a faster rate than ever before."

The words "divinely discontent" and "voracious appetite" really stand out for me. And if we approach our service with that same mentality we can always be in pursuit of doing better with each interaction, each time.

P.S. Over time the better the service received, the less likely customers would want to be on their phones – when you form relationships with customers (which is a long-term strategy) one of their main reasons for visiting your attraction will be for the service they receive in addition to the physical rides and attractions.



Image courtesy
Efteling

Chris Smoje is a Customer Service Expert, an alumni of the Disney Institute with theme park service leadership experience. Chris helps leaders and human resource teams create cultures that serve.

www.chrissmoje.com



Image courtesy Bobbejaanland

How attractions can successfully bounce back from the impact of COVID-19

By Chris Warhurst, CEO, Magic Memories

THERE'S no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on many industries around the globe, but the attractions industry has certainly been one of the hardest hit.

Strict lockdown measures that were put in place at the end of March last year meant that worldwide travel came to an almost complete standstill and attractions were forced to close their doors for months in order to prevent the spread of the virus.

Although we are now starting to see some signs of life – with global travel starting to resume and attractions beginning to open their doors once again – a great deal of uncertainty remains around how the industry will manage to bounce back after a huge set back.

And while guests are being encouraged to step foot into parks and attractions after such a long period of time, visitor capacity will be greatly reduced for the foreseeable future. No matter if capacity has to be reduced by 20 per cent, 50 per cent or even more in some cases, this will have a detrimental impact on revenue.

But this doesn't mean that it's all doom and gloom for the industry. In order to succeed, attractions can shift their priorities to make sure they can thrive once again, specifically being able to create an improved and immersive guest experience for the visitors of tomorrow post COVID-19.

Tapping into the experience economy

Although many are speculating the death of the once thriving experience economy as a result of the pandemic, several marketing professionals believe our post-Covid society will be "reborn as far less materialistic, more altruistic and increasingly socially aware." As we emerge from the pandemic, we'll see a new hunger and appreciation for more meaningful experiences that will help us to meet and fulfil our social needs after months of isolation.

It's clear from our research that memories beat materialism for making you happy, with 45 per cent of

adults revealing they would spend more money on a memorable experience they can enjoy rather than buy a physical possession. Shared experiences were what mattered the most, with 80 per cent saying that taking part in a day out, event or visit to an attraction is important. Although this survey was conducted in 2019, it's likely we'll see these figures increase once we are able to enjoy days out with our loved ones once again.

The desire to share

Our research also uncovered the importance of being able to share these memorable experiences, with 75 per cent of respondents stating that it is important to take photos when visiting tourist attractions and theme parks and nearly all (83 per cent) revealing that they showcase/ share photos of memorable experiences on social media – something that will remain important now and into the future.

This provides the industry with a huge revenue opportunity, but in order to capitalise on it, attractions need to capture visitors in special moments throughout the day and provide them with memorable content directly to their mobile phone in a seamless, unique and exciting way and understand how to monetise it in this new mobile first world.

This is especially true for the more experience-led attractions that are becoming more mainstream all over the world. Creating new content experiences for today's always-on consumers using a mix of onsite digital content and guests' personal mobile devices is adding new value to how guests create and share being together. Creating unique and very desirable products that truly celebrate these special times and places is now a proven formula.

Those attractions that offer the very best content experiences will increase guest engagement and drive conversion. Ultimately they will be the ones who successfully overcome the challenges of COVID-19 and who are able to thrive once again.

Antonio Zamperla, Jnr.



Antonio Zamperla, Jnr., CEO, Zamperla

Antonio Zamperla, Jnr., was recently appointed CEO of the well-known Italian ride manufacturer Antonio Zamperla SpA. Here InterPark talks to him about the history of the company, what his roles have been to date, his plans for the future, innovative attractions and more

InterPark: Can you provide a brief history of Zamperla?

Antonio Zamperla: The history of Zamperla dates back to a century-long family tradition, which started with an equestrian circus at the beginning of the 20th century and arrived, through the establishment and management of one of the first street-cinemas in Italy, at the craftsmanship and production of amusement rides in the 60s. Zamperla's entrepreneurial adventure began in those years, when my grandfather Antonio Zamperla, founder of Antonio Zamperla SpA, began making amusement rides in 1966. Today, Zamperla remains a family business and

has offices all around the world. But it is not just a family business because of my father and grandfather. We have people working in the company who now have the third generation of their own family working here too. The retention of employees is very high and the turnover very low; the average time people have worked here is 27 years and I believe this is also part of Zamperla's historic values. We have the latest technology and modern ways of working but also the same values as when the company was founded, even though so much has changed since then.

IP: When did you join the company and what positions have you held prior to becoming CEO? What activities did these roles involve?



AZ: Well, I've been testing the rides since I was three years old! When I was seven I operated a ride at the Gibtown trade show near Tampa, Florida, and at 12 I used to sweep the floors at our premises in the US and did some tours for customers. When I was 21 I worked part time at the head office in Vicenza while also attending university and after that I started full time, working in different departments doing various tasks, such as data input, administration, IT, purchasing and so on. Then I went to work at the park we managed from 2007 to 2010, Leolandia Minitalia near Milan, so I gained experience of both sides of the business and got to understand how to connect with the customers. It was a great opportunity for us to have the park as well as the manufacturing side. I subsequently became general manager of Zamperla, then chief innovative officer and sales officer, prior to becoming CEO. With the exception of the engineering department, I've done it all!

IP: Your father has obviously been at the forefront of the company for many years and is a very well-known figure in the industry? What will his future activities be now that you are CEO?

AZ: He is still very much involved in all the strategic aspects of the company. He has a great knowledge and has really been the powerhouse of the group over the years. The input and drive of the business really comes from my father. He pushes us for new technology and innovation. These capabilities are not unusual to find and are a great motivational aspect for us. I learn from him every single day.

IP: What are your plans for the future of Zamperla? Where do you envisage the company to be in, say, 10 years? What would you hope the business to have achieved by then?

AZ: We have started to invest a lot in the new coaster department with new technology, quality control and new coaster vehicles, and applying technology to coasters. We believe we have been missing out on this side of the market so have also brought Adam Sandy in to the company to help out here too. He has a lot of experience on this side of the business. We believe we are close to some of the biggest roller coaster manufacturers and want to be a leader in this field.

Zamperla is known as a kiddie ride and family rides manufacturer but lately, with the Thunderbolt coaster and the new Factory coaster in China, we have made big steps and I believe we will be a leader in this sector within the next 10 years. We are also considered a leader in the introduction of new rides each year and do one or two new major attractions annually.

IP: What would you say makes Zamperla stand out from other suppliers of similar products and services? What are your USPs?

AZ: We have one of the biggest line-ups of products of any company so can fulfil and provide products for a full and complete park if necessary. We have a 'one-stop-shop' approach for customers all over the world and can serve both mature and new markets and from the likes of Disney and Universal to the smallest of travelling fairgrounds. We are highly flexible in terms of production capabilities, offer great craftsmanship and a full understanding of the needs of our customers.

Another strength is our after sales service. We have 17 salesmen globally who are fully employed by us; they are not agents or people who also represent other companies. We have 45 technicians to help us maintain relations with customers for over 9,000 rides around the world. Zamperla is 55 years old this year and this is a reflection of our standing in the industry and we take responsibility for the rides we've built during this time. We don't let down our customers.

IP: Can you provide a few examples of some of the company's most recent major projects or some you are currently working on?

AZ: There are some we cannot mention, as always, but the Factory coaster that we have recently installed in China with a full line-up of features has

been our biggest coaster project to date. We are also continually developing new rides, as I mentioned, the latest of these being the Big WaveZ which I believe is a breakthrough attraction. What we offer means we are able to be involved in all sorts of projects around the world.

IP: Zamperla has introduced a number of innovations over the years, new companies and divisions within the group and is involved in the operation of parks as well. Where does the inspiration for these new developments come from?

AZ: My father really pushes us so we think laterally and 'outside the box.' In 2014 we established a new path for innovation and built the Z Laboratory to utilise different aspects of science. This led us to think outside the box when it came to developing new rides and our connection to our customers. The Z Lab is also where we rely on seeing new trends which helps us to be a leader in the market and not a follower. So we have people dedicated to looking at the future.

IP: Prior to the global pandemic, what changes and/or trends were you seeing in the parks and attractions industry globally?

AZ: What we were seeing and what will come is more interactivity, so guests being connected with the ride more and not just being transported. There will be more interaction with the ride for the guest rather than the experience being just passive.

IP: How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted Zamperla's overall business to date?

AZ: It brought a new mentality to the way we work. We have offices around the world and we were able to switch very quickly to working from home remotely, although it's not the most efficient way of doing things. The parks that opened in 2020 did get people through their gates as people want to be social, so the market will come back strongly. But of course most parks were closed for long periods so they will invest less for a time. We, however, decided to invest more into sales and marketing because the 'pie' has shrunk and we want as much of what is left as possible. 2020 will have an impact on the parks so 2021, in terms of their investment, will be lower. But 2022 and 2023 are looking promising. We have also thought about our internal structure

during this time and have streamlined some processes. Operating with an open heart and at full pace would have been difficult so we've had more time to dedicate to reimagining and restructuring the company to be ready for when the market comes back. We always look at how to overcome issues we are faced with and this is one. Also, if something similar happens in the future we want to be ready to deal with it.

IP: And what feedback are you getting from some of your clients as to how the pandemic has affected them? Is it different in different parts of the world?

AZ: This depends on the region. Because we work globally and are globally located – locally globally – we see that our office in China is able to work more like before now and is heading back to normality but others are still in different shapes. Anything we can do for our customers we do, as friends and partners. There are different aspects all over the world but because we have people globally they can understand each market better. But generally speaking, it's chaos!

Personally speaking

Not a lot of people know this but I am very good at ... skiing

The most interesting place I've ever been to is ... Lagazuoi, a place of total peace, unconnected to the world outside with no phones, etc.

Family aside, the prized possession I value above all others is ... a small key chain given to me by my grandfather. It is connected to a trade show many years ago

My favourite film is ... *Gladiator*

When I'm not working I like to ... Bike and ski

The person who has influenced me most is ... my grandfather. He had so much charisma, kindness and was a super hero to me, a man of other times

My favourite musician/band is ... Mumford and Sons

If I could invite a celebrity to dinner it would be ... as you haven't said if they must still be with us, it would be Walt Disney for his vision and Buzz Aldrin, who put his mission before anything else

My unfulfilled ambition is ... to be a firefighter. I've always loved fire trucks and think that firefighters are unsung heroes

I really dislike ... Intellectual dishonesty and hypocrisy

Parque Warner Madrid, Spain

SINCE opening in 2002, Parque Warner Madrid has defined the standard of what makes a great theme park. It is one of the most complete and modern amusement parks in Europe, with all the services to make every guest's visit a pleasant and easy one. Located in San Martín de la Vega, just 28km from Madrid, Parque Warner covers 700,000sq.m and brings the glitz and glamour of Hollywood to Spain.

Operated by Parques Reunidos, one of the leading global operators of regional leisure parks and one of three truly global leisure park operators, the park is home to 41 rides which can be found across five thematic areas, which are visited by more than two million guests annually. Each themed area has its own rides, restaurants and shops for guests to enjoy.

The first area visitors experience as they enter the park is the Hollywood Boulevard – a faithful recreation of the glitz and glamour found in the capital city of American entertainment. As guests stroll along the Walk of Fame, they will see the park pays tribute to some of the most famous stars of the big screen – from Morgan Freeman to Kevin Costner, Julia Roberts and Ingrid Bergman to name

but a few. Especially noteworthy is the Chinese Theatre, an exact replica of Californian Grauman's Chinese Theatre, standing with a facade similar to a huge Chinese pagoda and giving way to an enveloping and warm interior in which the colour red floods the hall and corridors of the venue. The Hollywood Boulevard also has an abundance of restaurants and shops for guests to choose from, whether that is enjoying American food at Foster's Hollywood, or picking up a souvenir to remember their trip to the park.

The DC Super Heroes World welcomes guests to the land of heroes and villains. Featuring exciting attractions, skill games and live shows, from the modern Metropolis, home of Superman, to the dismal Gotham City, where Batman keeps the peace, visitors write their own story through the experiences found here.

DC Super Heroes World contains some of Parque Warner's most impressive attractions. Superman, for example, is a seven loop and several free falls roller coaster that simulates the flight of the genuine hero at more than 100 km/h, while the Batman: Arkham Asylum roller coaster takes your breath away with steep drops, loops and bends

during 40 seconds of riding that takes guests to a top speed of 83 km/h, with a first heart-stopping drop of 31m in height, followed by five more loops. Also in the area is La Venganza del Enigma, a 100m high free-fall tower.

In the big cities of Gotham and Metropolis, people are always on the go, so when it's time to refuel and stop for something to eat, the fast food options at the Daily Planet and Gotham City Grill allow visitors to grab a bite, quickly recharge and get back to the thrills of Parque Warner. And when it comes to shopping, whether you're a Caped Crusader type or more of a Joker, DC Super Heroes World has shopping experiences to match a guest's mood. They can visit the Batman store for merchandise or the Joker's Candy Shop for some treats that will have even the grumpiest visitor asking "Why so serious?!"

Moving through the park, next stop is the Old West Territory where guests have to keep their wits about them as they journey through this homage to America's frontier western roots – if they're lucky, they might just walk right into an old-fashioned duel. Located in the west wing of the park and spreading across 78,000sq.m of fictitious town, including everything from houses, saloons, shops and more, after watching entertainers recreate a showdown worthy of the OK Corral, guests can also demonstrate their aim in different games of skill.

Attractions found in this area of the park include the spectacular wooden roller coaster Coaster-Express, which cuts through large valleys and reaches a top speed of 80 km/h. Then there is the water ride Rio Bravo, set in a gold mine with boats that pass through gorges, Red Indian villages and abandoned landscapes of the Far West. The gold rush also inspires Carros de la Mina with recreations of the small wagons that were used at the mining sites spinning guests around and around. Cataratas Salvajes on the other hand drives guests through a waterfall at high speed and is a ride for the whole family.

Food and drink in the Old West Territory can be found at El Rancho and the Cantina de los Bandidos, while shops include the Rio Bravo where guests can pick up a badge, bandana or cowboy hat to remind themselves of their time in the Wild West.

Cartoon Village is designed with Parque Warner's youngest guests in mind. Set in the world of Warner Bros. and Hanna Barbera comics, young guests might just bump into Bugs Bunny or Tweety Bird out for a stroll – and they will definitely need to guard those picnic baskets from Yogi Bear! Attractions include Tom and Jerry's Roller Coaster, which takes young riders along a fantastic cat-and-mouse journey before they bounce along to Daffy Duck's Bumper Cars, the Beep Beep Correcaminos and The ACME Factory.





Smaller guests can enjoy magnificent live shows at the Looney Tunes Amphitheatre, then visit the homes of their favourite characters, including Bugs, Daffy and Tweety. Food options cater to children within Cartoon Village while the Cartoon Classics store offers a wide range of merchandise showcasing the stars of Warner Bros. and Hanna-Barbera cartoons.

Movie World Studios is inspired by Hollywood production studios, with streets that recreate sets and scenes of famous movies. The famed production lots of Burbank, California, may be half a world away, but it certainly doesn't feel that way inside Movie World Studios. Attractions for guests to enjoy include Stunt Fall, a dizzying suspended roller coaster with seven inversions – the most in Europe on such a coaster. Guests can also travel to the land of Oz during musical performances of Wizard of Oz and enjoy live stunt shows such as Police Academy. Food choices include Spanish food at the Casa del Sol restaurant, while the shops offer merchandise from many well-known films, including Police Academy.

One of Parque Warner's most recent additions is the Parque Warner Beach, a waterpark, which received a significant expansion in 2018 with six new attractions

themed to DC Comics' Justice League. This impressive waterpark includes two huge wave pools, one designed with adults in mind and the other for children, plus two children's splash zones and a lazy river. The recent expansion allows visitors to head straight for Warner Beach if a day at the waterpark is all they want, a new, separate gate permitting admission solely to Parque Warner Beach.

What else will guests find at Warner Beach? Well, they can sink their toes in real sand at the solarium, perfect for sublime sunbathing during those warmer months, or they can opt for the VIP treatment and upgrade their trip to a VIP beach experience, modelled on some of the most chic beach piers of the Californian coast. And if shopping and food are in need, guests can choose from self-service restaurant El gran Kahuna BBQ, the DC Action Commissary, which serves Hawaiian-style food, or El Embarcadero with Scooby Doo, which serves American fast food from an authentic beach cabin.

Alongside all of the rides and themed attractions at Parque Warner, 58 performances and 18 shows, parades and animations take place every day. Additionally, as well as the regular show performances that run throughout the year, Parque Warner also puts on seasonal events around

Halloween (Delirium: The Musical; Freddy Krueger: Una Nueva Pesadilla; La Llorona: Pasaje del Terror; Pasaje Infantil: El Bosque Animado; and Personajes y Ambiente Halloween) and Christmas (Los Reyes Magos; Frosty Christmas Dance; The Christmas Musical; El Refugio de Papá Noel; Christmas Time Parade; and Lola Bunny: Christmas Party).

Parque Warner Madrid is one of the most advanced parks in all of Europe, many of its rides are unique and the park is also home to the second highest free fall drop tower in the world. Inspired by films produced by Warner Bros, Hollywood and more it is a park for the entire family to enjoy. It has also earned the Safest Spanish theme park award since 2006.

At a glance

Opened in April 2002

Located in Madrid, Spain

Operated by Parques Reunidos

5 themed areas - Hollywood Boulevard, Movie World Studios, DC Superheroes World, Old West Territory and Cartoon Village

Incorporates the waterpark Parque Warner Beach

41 rides

www.parquewarner.com



Welcome back

By Dennis Speigel



Image courtesy
Walt Disney Co./
Disneyworld

Continuing his series of articles on the attractions industry, International Theme Park Services (ITPS) founder and CEO Dennis Speigel discusses how travel has been impacted by the global pandemic and looks forward to the return of guests to parks and attractions in 2021

2021 is sure to hold a lot of surprises for the leisure and theme park industry. It seems that every time we turn a corner in this new year, obstacles appear. Nothing insurmountable, but nevertheless impediments.

Watching the industry globally as I do and speaking with people every day around the world, it is always interesting and surprising to hear the amazing differences various countries are experiencing and going through as it relates to 2021 operating season preparation.

There is no question that everyone and every park I speak with regarding the upcoming season is frantically preparing, planning for opening. Many of the problems around the globe are the same. If we announce opening dates, can those dates be confirmed?

Image courtesy
Six Flags



At the time of this writing here in the US, Covid cases are reducing. We are seeing drops in daily cases being reported by individual states. This comes as vaccinations continue to accelerate among various age groups and population sectors, i.e. first responders, police, teachers, doctors, etc. Good news for sure. However, there are still uncertainties that are on the radar screen, which provide hesitation on signing off on absolute dates for some re-openings. As an example, the mutation of the virus in Great Britain, Brazil and South Africa throw up significant red flags of concern.

Recently, a report on travel and tourism cast a shadow on near term domestic and international travel. Issues triggering the postponements were multi-faceted. With vaccine delays, border restrictions, quarantine guidelines and the new virus mutations, it appears that international travel for some countries will be stunted for several years. The report indicates there have been one billion fewer international arrivals since February 2020 and, also according to the report, the United Nations World Tourism organization has indicated that an expected travel rebound for 2021 has deteriorated.

Back in October 2020, 80 per cent of the travel experts canvassed believed 2021 would see a significant return to travel. By January 2021, that number dropped to 50 per cent, with 41 per cent believing it will take until 2024

Image courtesy
Kennywood

for travel to return to pre-2019 levels. Supporting data shows that, as of February 1, 2021, expected bookings for the first six months were only 15.5 per cent of what bookings were in 2019. Currently, flights for the month of February 2021 are down 50 per cent globally, compared to February 2019. Keep in mind, international tourism accounted for 10 per cent of our global economy pre-pandemic.

A glimmer of good news is that the “staycation” may come into play once again. People who are not travelling long distances on planes may very well recreate closer to home (this applies globally), thereby supporting local and regional attractions. We know people love our industry and our attractions. We saw in the fourth quarter of last year around the globe, that when attractions offered adapted Halloween and Christmas programmes, primarily outside, they saw attendance hit the allowable capacity levels. Many attractions that opened could have doubled their capacity allotments and some could have tripled their numbers. A positive sign of revisitation.

What can the returning guests expect when attractions do re-open? Well, based on World Health Organization (WHO) information and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), masks may very well be mandatory into 2022. We also know that touchless, contactless transactions are here to stay. Attractions that instituted contactless/touchless programmes have seen positive increases in per capita in-park spending. Guests will also see continued sanitising and disinfecting throughout all attractions around the world.

One common area of concentration that all parks are focusing on is getting back to 2019 capacity levels. For 60 years, our daily operating programmes have depended on moving people smoothly, efficiently and safely. We entertain people in a process of balance and flow that guests do not perceive happening. Our attraction capacity guidelines are what make this guest balance and flow efficiency happen. In turn, the guests feel and believe they are receiving a true, positive, price-value relationship for their admission fee.

It is universally expected that capacity guidelines will continue to be moderated by local, state or provincial authorities. While 2021 capacity guidelines are not currently known, the majority of operators believe there will be ongoing guidelines similar to what we experienced during the 2020 season.

Over 370+ million people visited USA parks and attractions during 2019. Over 500 million visited global parks and attractions. Our industry is strong, resilient and globally loved. Our guests are itching to come back to our parks. They miss us and we miss them! We cannot wait to get back together. It will take time for parks and guests to return to a semblance of normality, but we will get there. Our guests have been tolerant and are loyal, no matter where we are located on the globe and they know we provide the world’s pre-eminent form of family entertainment in safe, secure locations. Guests will find, when they return to themed attractions worldwide, that we are awaiting their return with safe, open, entertaining arms and with huge “WELCOME BACK” smiles on our faces.

Dennis Spiegel is founder and CEO of International Theme Park Services (ITPS), based in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. A past chairman of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), he has over 50 years’ experience in the theme park and leisure industry. Since its inception in 1983 ITPS has worked on over 500 projects in 50 countries and is uniquely qualified to assist in all aspects of entertainment project development.

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News round-up ...

US Herschend Enterprises has become a majority partner and operator of Kentucky Kingdom and Hurricane Bay amusement and waterpark located in Louisville, Kentucky. Georgia-based Herschend is the nation's largest family-owned themed attractions and entertainment company, operating venues including Dollywood Parks and Resorts in Tennessee and the Newport Aquarium in northern Kentucky. The company has a history of delivering world class entertainment experiences and through a collaborative effort between Kentucky Kingdom, LLLP, the Kentucky State Fair Board, the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet and the Finance and Administration Cabinet, Herschend will now expand its business operations to Louisville as the new majority partner of Kentucky Kingdom Theme Park, LLC.

CANADA Dynamic Technologies Group has announced that Jerry Pierson has been appointed president and chief operating officer of the company, subject to TSXV approval. Pierson has spent over 25 years in the themed attraction business and has been leading Dynamic's organisation in the US, based out of Orlando, for the past three years, in addition to managing the controls department for the company. The promotion includes being president and COO of Dynamic Attractions, Dynamic Entertainment and Dynamic Structures. Hao Wang will be leaving his post as president and COO for personal reasons and returning to his home in Toronto, although he has been appointed to the board of directors of the company.

US Visitors to Wisconsin's Wilderness Resort boarding the new FlyRide Take Flight attraction will enjoy an aerial view of US national parks, national landmarks and the Wisconsin Dells. The aerial adventure ride was developed by SimEx-Iwerks and uses four Christie D4K40-RGB pure laser projectors with Christie Mystique, a camera-based, multi-projector alignment and blending system.

The Take Flight attraction takes guests on a journey beginning at an airport-themed lobby. "Windows" look out onto the National Parks and guests queue at an "airport" which features airplane seats. They then enter the ride, which accommodates 60 guests, with five on each ride vehicle. The Take Flight ride opened in September 2020.

US Dollywood theme park is gearing up for a busy 2021 with a raft of entertainment set to be on offer to guests during the park's 36th season. New during this year's Flower and Food Festival is the Melodies of Spring concert, while several shows featuring Dollywood's own performers were due to debut when the park opened in March. These include Harmonies of the Heart and A Brighter Day. In The Village, Dollywood's The Tones will offer a fresh acapella take on today's current hits and all three shows will continue until the fall. Dollywood's Summer Celebration will take place from June 25 to July 31 and later in the season, Dollywood's Harvest Festival will run from September 24 to October 30. The season ends with Dollywood's Smoky Mountain Christmas from November 6 to January 2, 2022.

US Falcon's Creative Group has introduced the ON!X Theatre which the company describes as "a dynamic, interactive environment that establishes a new way to explore fantasy worlds." Utilising a robust system of intuitively designed player controls and special effects, the attraction features continuous positional tracking, personalised player triumph moments, robust audience accessibility, real-time scoring and much more. The seats provide feedback based on the players' actions, so every experience is different, encouraging repeat visitation. All of these environmental capabilities are complemented by fluent, vibrant content that lives within a rich, themed story where "characters burst to life."

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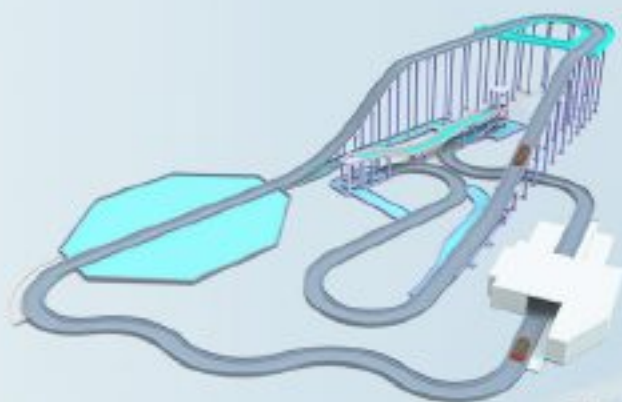
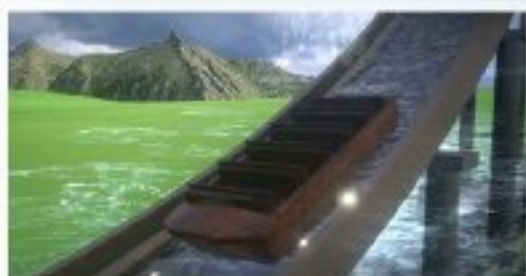
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